Tuesday December 23 1997

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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Printed in London, Manchester, Frankfurt and Roubaix

Who will win the ratings war?

The battle for Christmas Day

G2 with European weather

Libby Brooks on latter-day Marys

Search for a modern virgin

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Education

Books and tapes to kindle a young imagination

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The disabled dilemma

Ben Furner: 'It moves away from the principle of helping the disabled with costs' PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEASER

It sounds simple: decide who is genuinely in need and then apportion the money. But is it that easy?

Margaret Edwards and son Paul: 'No prospect of me returning to work' PHOTOGRAPH: NIGEL BOWLES

Labour 'is using black propaganda'

David Brindle and Michael White

TONY BLAIR was last night mounting a frantic damage-limitation exercise over government plans to cut disability benefits, as growing anger led to arrests of wheelchair-bound protesters in Whitehall.

But the Government's fightback appeared to make matters worse. Disabled people were incensed at what they saw as a black propaganda campaign by Labour spin doctors, desperate to extricate ministers from their difficulties over the planned cuts.

As a dozen disabled people were arrested in protests at Westminster, and red paint was splattered over the Downing Street gates, disability groups were outraged by government-inspired reports that many benefit claimants were well off.

According to the reports, £10 billion of the annual bill for disability benefits goes to households on above-average incomes. Some £3.5 billion goes to the 25 per cent of households with the highest incomes, either £20,000 a year for a single person or £27,000 for a couple.

With the Department of Social Security last night distancing itself from this interpretation of the figures, disability organisations accused the government machine of resorting to underhand tactics to get ministers off the hook. "It's now as if disabled people are being scapegoated," said Brian Lamb, assistant director of Scope, the cerebral palsy charity. "We are all in favour of welfare-to-work schemes for disabled people who are capable of work, but the spin doctors are taking things on to a different plane."

Publicly, the Government continues to argue that its review of disability benefits seeks merely to focus spending on those in real need.

Mr Blair reiterated that the system had to change. "What we have got to do is make sure those people who are genuinely in need get the help they want because the system at the moment is failing them."

Disability organisations have grown increasingly angry at behind-the-scenes briefings, however, starting at the end of last week before the leaking of the memorandum by David Blunkett, Education and Employment Secretary, criticising the main cuts proposals and seeming to confirm a fundamental Cabinet split on the issue.

Stories were planted in the media about people claiming disability benefits when they were fit to work. In fact, most disabled people are past retirement age and official estimates have suggested that only one in five might be of working age, unemployed and capable of work with the right kind of support.

Yesterday's income figures, released selectively ahead of official publication next month, brought the mood among disability activists to boiling point.

Reports suggested that 40 per cent of the £24 billion bill for disability benefits went on payments to households with "above-average" incomes. On the face of it, this presented solid justification for means-testing or taxing the allowances. However, the DSS —

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Ian Aitken, page 9

Ben Furner, aged 31, PR consultant, Brighton

'I HAVE cerebral palsy, a condition that occurs at or around the time of birth and involves damage to the brain. I have one leg shorter than the other. My hand function is not up to speed.

I have increasing difficulty in performing day-to-day tasks. I had to make some changes to my lifestyle. Over the last four years I have spent thousands on treatments I could not get on the NHS.

I applied for disability living allowance in the spring. The conditions are incredibly stringent. I have been advised not to walk very far or do too much activity which would cause my body damage.

I receive £270 a month disability living allowance — £65 a week. This allows me to pay someone to do my shopping and cleaning, which I have been advised not to do. It helps towards the costs of running my car, which has to be an automatic. I get tired more easily than a non-disabled person. Some evenings I have to get a take-away when I get home. The problem is I stumble, and throw the food around.

I can't believe this Government is going to change disability living allowance. I'm a PR consultant on a good salary and I'm exactly in the target range they are gunning for. They will go for disabled people who are working.

I don't think this is right. It moves us away from the principle of disabled people getting help with the costs of disability. That is what the disabled living allowance is about.

If my benefit is taken away the costs are still there.

One way to cope would be to stop paying money into my pension. The reality, though, is I'm highly unlikely to work until retirement age. The problem is my retirement will cost me a lot of money because of additional medical costs.'

Margaret Edwards, aged 44, cares for her disabled son Paul, aged 18, in Eastbourne, East Sussex.

'I'M 44 and have been divorced for 15 years. I have brought Paul up since he was three. I have an older son who has a young family of his own.

Paul has cerebral palsy, severe learning difficulties and epilepsy. He is confined to a wheelchair. When Paul turned 18 I lost most of my benefits. I get £62.50 a week in income support and carers' allowance. Paul is the wage earner, really. He receives £59.85 a week and £49.50 disability allowance.

I'm up at the same time every morning, 6am. I have to get Paul washed, dressed, toileted and shaved. I have to get him down to a day-care centre during the week.

For those who are capable of going out to work, changes to benefit are fine. But they are making it too broad. They are not taking into account those who are unable to work. I don't drink or smoke. I have no social life. You can't get sitters for a disabled person with epilepsy. I get three nights off every month.

When Paul was smaller I used to work as an escort for a school bus. But everything I earned over £15 meant I lost benefit pound for pound. I was only £15 better off a week. For benefit purposes I am treated like an ordinary single parent. Now Paul is older there is no prospect of me returning to work.

Paul needs lots of special things the Government does not provide. I had to beg charities to get a special raised bed for him, which cost £1,200. We have lived off charity and the state for 18 years.

Obviously people will say we are society's scroungers. But most of us want to earn our own living. If I was an ordinary single mother with an 18-year-old son, I would work, not live off the state. I dread what is going to happen.'

Interviews by Luke Harding

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Kendal House,
4 Brighton Mews,
Clifton, Bristol BS8 2NX
Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority

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Sketch

My awards. You're supposed to clap

Simon Hoggart

ONCE again, I present my political awards for the past year.

Insult of the Year: I liked the unnamed Tory backbencher who first called Piers Merchant "The Hostess Trolley" (his girlfriend worked as a hostess in a Soho "club"), and Lord McAlpine's lip-curling dismissal of John Major: "He was often at Chequers, pretending to be a pair of curtains." (My advice to our former prime minister: pull yourself together!) But the winner is from another unnamed source, the manager of one of the failed Tory leadership campaigns: "William Hague, oh dear, the human embryo." As "foetus", this went on to become the most celebrated insult of the past twelve months.

Prediction of the Year: Just before the election, Robin Cook was invited to place a £100 bet for charity by Ladbrokes. He put it on William Hague to be next leader of the Tories, at a parsimonious 4-1.

Slogan of the Year: The Tories held a press conference in a room whose walls were emblazoned with the message "Britain is booming — don't let Labour blow it" on the very morning Mr Merchant's "sex act" with his hostess was described in the tabloids. It wasn't Labour which was blowing it, then — that came later.

Euphemism of the Year: Earl Howe described Diana, Princess of Wales, shortly before her death as "a loose cannon" on the subject of landmines. Challenged about whether he had made the remark at all, he declined to deny it, but squirmed thus: "I do not recognise it."

Harriet Harman described the Government's decision to cut benefit to unemployed single parents as "increasing their freedom of choice". Peter Mandelson, asked why he was being so secretive about the accounts, the plans and the contents of the Millennium Dome, replied: "I don't call it secrecy, I call it inhibition."

Understatement of the Year: At the end of a paeon to William Hague at the Tory conference, Cecil Parkinson declared: "He is the right man for the job!" When this remark was met by silence, he added: "You're supposed to clap!", so drawing attention to the fact that nobody had.

Chutzpah of the Year: Tony Blair's speech at the Labour conference. The religious allegory was intense, but the line: "One cross, on the ballot paper . . . a nation reborn" seemed to imply that the election had been both the Passion and the Resurrection.

Balancing Act of the Year: Janet Anderson, the Labour whip, had the job of bringing to the Commons Her Majesty's Gracious Thanks for their Gracious Message thanking her for her Most Gracious Speech. This involves walking backwards from the Mace to the Bar of the House, while bowing repeatedly to the Speaker. Ms Anderson had chosen that day to wear high heels. Her wobbles, her almost vertiginous perambulation, followed by her successful arrival, called forth delirious cheers.

Speaker of the Year: This must go to Ann Widdecombe. Her attack on Michael Howard sent him from being a good prospect for the Tory leadership to the very bottom of the first ballot. And her dazzling burst of controlled hatred against fox hunting last month might even have changed a few people's minds.

Majorism of the Year: A shameless harking back to past glories. To Paddy Ashdown: "Not only are the Liberals unable to agree among themselves, they can't even agree with themselves!"

To Mr Blair: "You have been caught with your fingers in the till, oratorically!"

And to journalists during the election campaign: "A soundbite never buttered a parsnip."

But the Majorism of the Year award must go to Mr Blair, for his first usage of Mr Major's favourite phrase: "It's a bit rich for the party opposite . . ." To me, his first attempt to say: "Well, we may be awful, but we're not as bad as that lot," was the real end of innocence.

Harrods owner confident of British nationality as Home Secretary changes passport application rules

Straw opens door to Fayed

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

☐ 1992-3: Fayed brothers Mohamed (left) and Ali apply for British citizenship backed by Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare, Field Marshall Lord Bramall, Tory MP Sir Peter Hordern and image maker to Lady Thatcher, Sir Gordon Reece.

☐ Dec 93: Head of the Immigration and Nationality Department refers their applications to Charles Wardle, Immigration Minster, as "exceptional cases".

☐ Oct 94: The Home Secretary, Michael Howard, issues statement detailing the limits of his personal involvement in the previous 12 months in the brothers' citizenship applications.

Mr Howard said he had on three occasions refused attempts by his junior immigration ministers, Charles Wardle and his successor, Nicholas Baker, to refer the decision to him and only once suggested further inquiries by the Bank of England.

☐ March 1995: The Fayed brothers each receive a one-line letter from the Home Office minister, Nicholas Baker, rejecting their applications for citizenship.

☐ Feb 1996: Fayeds lose first round of their High Court fight. The judge says that his decisions "may have lacked the appearance of fairness" but were lawful.

☐ Nov 1996: Court of Appeal gives Fayed brothers victory.

☐ Dec 1997: Straw concedes and invites new applications.

THE Harrods owner and scourge of the Tory establishment, Mohamed Al Fayed, last night said he was confident he would finally become a British citizen after the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, announced he was changing the rules on applications for British passports.

The Government is to drop its legal battle with the Egyptian-born Mr Al Fayed and his brother, Ali, and in future give reasons for refusing each of the 5,000 citizenship applications turned down every year.

But it is not a foregone conclusion they will be granted British passports. A Scotland Yard inquiry is underway into allegations that Mohamed Al Fayed authorised Harrods bank staff to break into a safety deposit box belonging to his commercial rival, the Lonrho chairman, Tiny Rowland.

Mr Al Fayed said: "I love this country and I am confident that the Labour Home Secretary will consider our citizenship applications with fairness. Having lived here for more than 30 years and done my best to play a positive part in the life of this country, I should like to share the nationality of my four British children."

The Court of Appeal ruled more than a year ago that the brothers had been unfairly treated in 1995 by the then home secretary, Michael Howard, and quashed his decision not to grant them citizenship. Mr Straw announced last night he was dropping the Government's appeal to the House of Lords.

In the Appeal Court ruling, Lord Woolf said: "They have not had the fairness to which they are entitled." He was told by the Al Fayeds' lawyers that in the absence of any official reason for the citizenship refusals, there had been widespread speculation that they were motivated by "legally improper and purely political grounds."

Sir Gordon Downey, the parliamentary commissioner for standards, has rejected Mr Al Fayed's claim that Mr Howard was prejudiced against him because of his family ties with Harold Landy, a business associate of Mr Rowland, the former Lonrho chief executive with whom Mr Al Fayed fought a bitter takeover battle for control of the House of Fraser group.

Mr Straw said last night it would now fall to him to decide the renewed citizenship applications from the two brothers.

"I have long been unhappy with the practice of not giving reasons when refusing some applications for British citizenship," he said in a Commons written answer. "I am required to give reasons in a wide range of immigration cases and I can see no persuasive argument why my decisions involving refusals of British citizenship should not be similarly open to public scrutiny."

It is widely believed at Westminster that the Department of Trade and Industry inquiry into the Harrods takeover battle and the refusal of British citizenship to the two brothers lay behind the "cash for questions affair" which led to the resignation of two Government ministers, Tim Smith and Neil Hamilton.

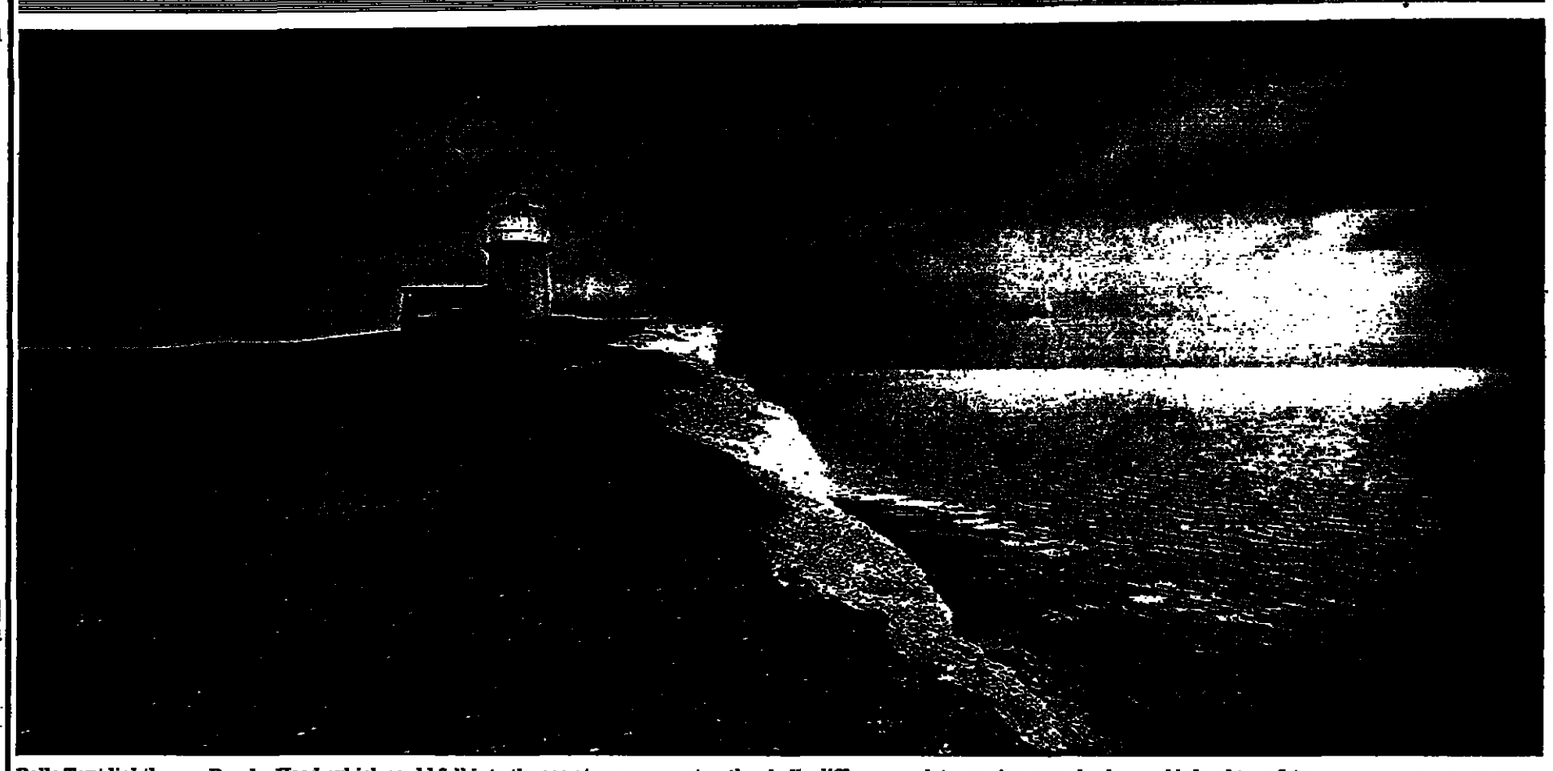
Mr Straw said that in deciding reasons should be given in citizenship cases, he had not considered any of the original papers in the Al Fayeds' application. Home Office civil servants will now prepare a fresh report on the applications. The previous decision was made by the Conservative immigration minister, Charles Wardle.

It was seen as a hot political potato in the Home Office at the time, and Mr Howard and Mr Wardle "batted it back and forth between them."

Last night Mr Al Fayed said Mr Straw's decision was "an important step forward for the very many people in the same position as my brother Ali and myself who have had applications for naturalisation turned down but who have been denied the reason why.

"Mr Straw has acted in the best interests of everyone in this country, whether British subjects or not.

"It is a very good thing for natural justice to tell the people the reason if they are being denied a privilege which is extended to many thousands of people every year."



Belle Tout lighthouse, Beachy Head, which could fall into the sea at any moment as the chalk cliffs succumb to erosion, may be dragged inland to safety PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Clifftop couple make light of moving house to a safer place

Rory Carroll

IT FEELS safe standing on top of Belle Tout, a granite lighthouse. Horizon stretches all around, vanishing points of greyness where an overcast sky meets the Channel or melts into the Sussex hills.

Gulls whirl overhead while waves thud against the rocks. They sound far away. Six hundred tons of crafted granite support the tower, anchoring it to the landscape.

Yards away is a sheer 300ft drop down the chalk cliffs of Beachy Head. The edge of the cliff looks jagged, as if Godzilla lumbered out of the sea and took a bite. Trouble is, another chunk is due to go.

Sea erosion has undermined the base and could plunge the 19th century lighthouse into the rocks and surf at any moment. Predicting when the cliff might crumble next is impossible. Erosion comes in irregular but massive falls, when tens of thousands of tons of chalk break off into the sea.

A century after first shining its white light to warn sailors, Belle Tout is literally on the brink of disaster.

Mark and Louise Roberts knew this when they moved in a year ago, but are gambling nothing will happen while they prepare a drastic solution: lift the entire lighthouse two feet into the air, ease it onto greased tracks and push it 70 yards inland.

Everything should remain in place while the hydraulic rams start pushing: the lamp tower, metre-thick concrete walls, wood-panelled floors, CD player, even the satsumas on the kitchen counter.

House insurers declined the Roberts' offer of business, suggesting they come back when the move is complete.

If Eastbourne Council approves, contractors will start digging underneath the 45ft tower in June. Beams will support the walls and hydraulic jacks raise the structure, while sliding tracks are placed underneath. It will be lowered onto grease skates and shunted northwards on to the old croquet lawn.

Until then the Roberts must keep a leery vigil on rain as well as the sea. Rain filters through the ground, freezes, expands and causes further erosion, which might have been news to a former owner who blamed rabbits and abseiled down the cliffs to plug their burrows.

Such problems were not anticipated in 1832 when, after 200 years of lobbying to do something about the shipwrecked corpses washing up on beaches, money was found to build Belle Tout. Sea mist obscured its light and in 1902 it was decommissioned in favour of Beachy Head light, at the foot of the cliffs.

Belle Tout remained occupied, partly because of experts who judged it safely inland. One respected geological professor in the 1930s assured the nervous owner, Sir James Purves-Stewart, that it was safe for another 600 years. "This calmed my apprehensions and relieved my insomnia," noted Sir James.

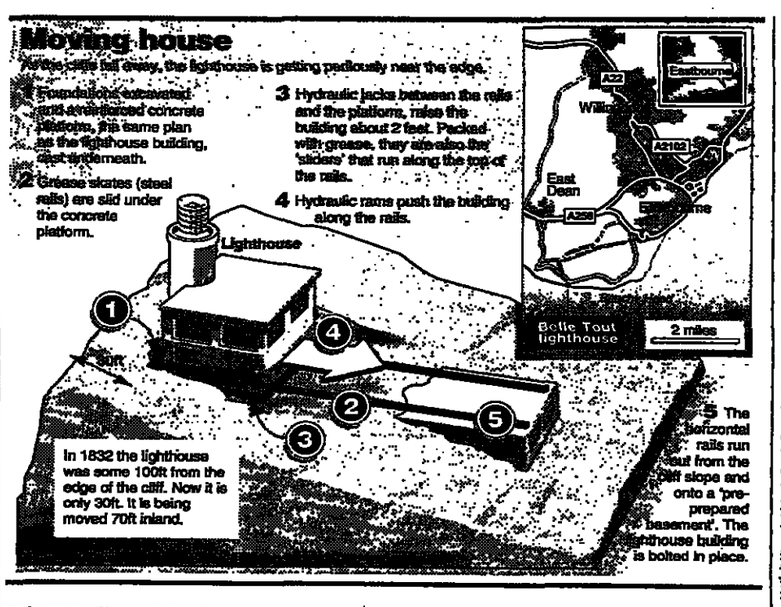
The Second World War didn't do much for his peace of mind. Ignored by the Luftwaffe, Belle Tout was used as target practice by Canadian gunners.

Ruined and empty, it became a listed building after the war and saw a succession of tenants including the BBC, which took it over in 1987 to film Fay Weldon's Lifes and Loves of a She Devil.

It is worth more than £200,000 but, needing £250,000 just for the move, the Roberts hope the South Down Lighthouse Trust succeeds in raising corporate sponsorship.

After three months' preparation, the move — due next September — should take only six hours. It is likely to become a media event.

"If it works we'll restore the original title, Belle Toute," says Mr Robinson. The E fell off.



Review

Out of Jamaica's hall of infamy

Garth Cartwright

Buju Banton
Brixton Academy, London

BUJU Banton, long absent from these shores, returned to conquer Brixton on Sunday night. I have seen countless performances at the Academy, but it is a rare event where the audience rise as one to chant, cheer and sing with the artist. Banton, Jamaica's favourite son and possessor of the New Bob Marley tag, performed like a man possessed.

Which he may well be. Banton, at 24, is the most gifted Jamaican singer and songwriter since Marley's tragic death from cancer 16 years ago. What is more, he clawed his way out of the West Kingston ghettos with a reputation built on being one of ragga's nastiest stars. Born Mark Myrie — his stage name is slang for chubby storyteller — Banton's gruff style of chatting over harsh, electronic rhythms made him a star in the post-reggae world of ragga.

He topped the Jamaican chart in 1991 and rose to international infamy with Boom Bye Bye — a song which endorsed the shooting of gay men. Then, in a seemingly miraculous conversion, Banton apologised, became a Rastafarian and embraced all things righteous. While sceptics sneered that this was a smokescreen to detract from the controversy, in early 1995 Banton released 'Til Shiloh, a seminal record. Not only did it show Banton reappraising his way of living, his skilful songs welded ragga and reggae into a forceful medium.

Since then Banton has been uncharacteristically quiet. Almost three years of silence is a long time in any form of music, especially one where new stars can be made and fade within a matter of weeks. But Banton is beginning to be seen as one of the giants of 1990s black music, and Brixton gave him its loudest welcome since Nelson Mandela.

If his new album Inna Heights is a more mellow affair than Shiloh, live he remains a force of nature. Taking the stage in a blinding white suit, he called out for spiritual support. Brixton roared in affirmation and Banton spent the next 80 minutes throwing his lanky frame around with great intensity.

Opening with Destiny, he sang beautifully, his raw voice sweetened by three backing vocalists whose African gospel stylings lifted the sound. Beneath them a tight, tough rhythm section punched out huge drum and bass patterns. Banton rarely stopped for breath as he tore up old hits (no Boom Bye Bye, mind you), delivered impassioned versions of Shiloh's anthem and teased the crowd as he stretched out introductions, conducted the band and danced knees up high. On Not An Easy Road he sang "living in London is not easy, living in Brixton is not easy" to huge cheers from an audience made up almost entirely from the West Indian community.

Ending with Murderer, his furious plea against ghetto violence, Banton's voice and presence were still echoing around the Academy minutes later. The New Bob Marley? Buju Banton is exceptional simply by being himself.

the week

With specialist news, profiles and the latest developments

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Every Saturday in The Guardian INTERNATIONAL

Pill offers hair today, and tomorrow

Martin Kettle in Washington

CHRISTMAS came early for millions of middle-aged, balding Americans yesterday when America's drug licensing authority approved the sale of the country's first daily anti-baldness pill.

The decision by the food and drug administration means that Propecia, manufactured by pharmaceutical giant Merck, will be available on prescription as early as January, at a cost of around $50 (£30) for a month's supply.

Among the more than 33 million balding American men who might be tempted to invest in the new product is the vice-president, Al Gore. Polls have long shown that voters prefer leaders with full heads of hair.

Propecia's manufacturers spent yesterday emphasising that they had not come up with an instant miracle cure.

Merck said in a statement that Propecia had halted hair loss in 83 per cent of men who had taken the drug in experiments. They added that 30 per cent of bald men can expect to grow slight amounts of hair in the first year, and that a further 18 per cent can look forward to moderate-to-heavy growth. However, no one who has taken the pill in trials has achieved a full head of hair — and some saw no difference at all, Merck said.

The company also stressed that the pill will only be available to men because of fears that it can cause birth defects in babies if taken by women.

Propecia works against the hormone testosterone, which is linked to male baldness. It stops testosterone from converting to DHT (dihydrotestosterone), which scientists think can work gradually to make hair follicles smaller. Men born with low levels of DHT rarely lose their hair.

Merck discovered Propecia when it found that men taking the company's prostate medication Proscar were growing hair. Propecia is a lower-dose formulation of Proscar.

But there is a downside. Tests have shown that 2 per cent of men taking Propecia reported diminished sex drive, difficulty in achieving an erection, and/or a decrease in the amount of semen.

An English professor who has been using the drug for six months said: "I was hoping to be cured of lustful thoughts but it didn't work." The treatment had not done much for his hair loss either, he added.

Labour 'is using black propaganda on benefits'

continued from page 1

which admitted it was the source of the figures — said later that this figure was debatable, and did not take account of the income required by disabled people to meet their extra costs.

"The reason they receive benefit, and may therefore seem to have higher income, is because the Government recognises they have extra needs, a spokesman said.

Disability groups called for an end to partial briefing of the media. Mr Lamb said: "A lot of what is going on is really quite insidious. It's in complete contrast to the constructive relationship we have established with the Government in the area of discussing civil rights."

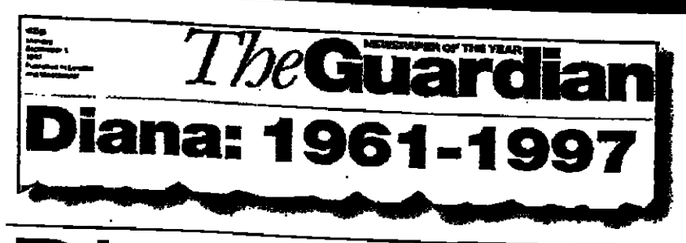
Neil Betteridge, head of projects and campaigns at Radar, another leading disability charity, said: "We just don't know where we stand, or what the Government thinks 'real need' is."

Mr Blair's office yesterday dismissed suggestions that Mr Blunkett had been behind the weekend leak of his own protest memo to Gordon Brown, the Chancellor.

A senior minister said: "This was a hostile leak — a hand grenade deliberately aimed at trying to separate Blair and Blunkett." Suspicion in some quarters fell on Mr Brown's allies.

Leader comment, page 8

The year in headlines



Diana's death — and other top stories

John Ezard

THREE of the deepest human instincts — tenderness, fascination with celebrity and gut self-interest — dominated the world media's sense of priority yesterday in choosing the biggest news stories of 1997.

A poll of the 10 stories with the greatest international impact was easily topped by an individual cataclysm — the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in a car crash in August.

In a survey of 119 media outlets in 43 countries by the news agency Associated Press, Diana's death received 42 per cent more votes than its closest rivals — Britain's handover of Hong Kong to China in July and last month's spread of the Asian currency crisis from Malaysia to Japan.

The handover of 6 million people — described by Hugo Young in the Guardian as the first decolonisation "to pass a people from freedom into bondage" — drew 529 votes compared with 908 for Diana's death.

The currency crashes, affecting tens of millions — and potentially billions — of people, received 527 votes, possibly because they have not, so far, unhinged Japan's economy or lived up to fears of a repeat of the 1929 Wall Street crash.

Some way behind that came another, long-expected death of a long-loved woman, Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

These events pushed into fifth place the election of Tony Blair and New Labour after 18 years in political exile, despite the interest that May 1 and its aftermath held for international headlines and political fashion.

By contrast, President Bill Clinton's predictable re-election in the United States — later in the year and in a much more influential country — topped last year's AP poll. It was followed by President Boris Yeltsin's political and physical comeback in Russia.

This year no Russian event makes the top 10. The Mir space station's troubles were rated only 20th in world importance.

France's unexpected election of a Socialist government suffered the snub of making only 15th place, a rating which may partly reflect the Anglophile tendencies of international news agencies.

The development which will have arguably the greatest long-term effect of the human race — the cloning of Dolly the sheep in Scotland — came 10th.

The choking and terrifying blanket of haze cast over south-east Asia by forest fires could manage only 17th place.

AP asked its subscribers to choose their top 10 news stories. Ten points awarded for first place, nine for second and so on.

Diana's death took first place in the lists of 48 subscribers, well over a third of the total. This reflected global television coverage and column inches in newspapers large and small.

Even the tiny English-language Cyprus Weekly, which has 12,000 readers, said in its return that the story received the most coverage of any in its 18-year history.

"Death of the famous — violent and not — was featured on the front pages quite often this year," the Italian news agency AGI noted.

Diana's loss headed a year of high-profile obituaries that included Mother Teresa, the Chinese paramount leader Deng Xiaoping (seventh in the ballot), the former Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko (14th) and the murdered fashion designer Gianni Versace (19th).

All but Versace's death were viewed as more important than the revelation of Switzerland's profiteering from Holocaust bank accounts (18th), a story involving 6 million dead, their families and survivors.

The world's media went into overdrive following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in a Paris car crash

Stories rated 11th to 20th in importance in the poll were:

11 — The stand-off between the United Nations and Iraq over weapons inspections;

12 — The Pathfinder space probe lands on Mars;

13 — Nato invites Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to join;

14 — Mobutu ousted in civil war and dies in exile;

15 — Leftwing parties win French election;

16 — Muslim violence in Algeria;

17 — South-east Asian haze;

18 — Swiss banks reveal Holocaust accounts;

19 — Versace shot dead in Miami;

20 — Mir space station troubles.

Other stories seen as important by a minority of news organisations were North Korea's famine and economic troubles; Cambodia's coup and Pol Pot's trial; air crashes in Sumatra and Guam; the El Niño weather phenomenon; the start of talks between the British Government and Sinn Fein; and official figures showing the continued spread of Aids, especially in Africa — a situation which will affect tens of millions of lives.

● *John Ezard is editor of this year's 45th issue of the annual Guardian anthology, Guardian Year '97 (Fourth Estate, £12.99, now in bookshops), which prints our staff's and contributors' reporting on many of these events.*

Governor Chris Patten's handover of Hong Kong to China in July ranked second on the scale of importance

The top ten

TOP 10 international news stories of 1997, according to the AP poll. Ten points were awarded for every first-place vote down to one point for each 10th-place vote. Number of first-place nominations in brackets.

1 Princess Diana's death (48), 908 points.
2 Hong Kong handover (6), 529.
3 Asian currency crisis (12), 527.
4 Mother Teresa's death (2), 305.
5 Tony Blair's election (5), 290.
6 Attack on tourists in Luxor, Egypt, leaves 68 dead (1), 280.
7 Deng Xiaoping's death (1), 275.
8 Mideast peace process bogs down (8), 267.
9 Four-month hostage crisis in Lima ends (3), 266.
10 Scottish scientists clone Dolly the sheep (4), 251.

Third place: financial turmoil in Asia

Scargill 'mismanaged' mine funds

NUM cries foul as leader's role in running charities censured

Seumas Milne
Labour Editor

ARTHUR Scargill, the National Union of Mineworkers' President, was yesterday accused by the Charity Commission of "misconduct and mismanagement" in his role as chairman of two miners' welfare charities, and warned that it plans to remove him as a trustee.

The veteran miners' leader and his deputy, fellow NUM official Frank Cave — also censured by the Commissioners — have until the end of next month to contest the decision, which follows a prolonged post-privatisation struggle over the control of coalfield welfare funds.

The NUM, whose annual conference denounced the Charity Commission's behaviour as outrageous, is already suing the government agency over its decision last June to suspend Mr Scargill — though not Mr Cave — as a trustee of the charities. The case is due to come to the High Court in the New Year.

The year-long controversy centres on an £800,000 payment made from one charity, the Yorkshire Miners' Welfare Trust Fund, to another, the Yorkshire Miners' Welfare Convalescent Homes Trust, aimed at giving a permanent future to the retired miners' homes.

The NUM wanted to move the money to protect it from being scooped up for controversial "partnership-funding" schemes. These were established at the time of coal privatisation in 1994-5 to replace government and employer funding of coalfield welfare bodies with cash from local miners' trust funds. Mr Scargill has said he regards the partnership funding as the theft of miners' money.

There is no suggestion that either Mr Scargill or Mr Cave — who are also both leading figures in the Socialist Labour Party set up by Mr Scargill last year — sought to benefit personally from the way the two charities were run. The two men have acted throughout on legal advice, and the Yorkshire NUM area council yesterday damned the Charity Commission's move as the latest in a "long line" of attacks on Mr Scargill.

Arthur Scargill ... acted throughout on legal advice

But, triggered by complaints from two former British Coal-appointed trustees, the year-long investigation by the Charity Commission found that the two NUM leaders had voted through the transfer without the necessary number of trustees present, and had failed to follow correct procedures.

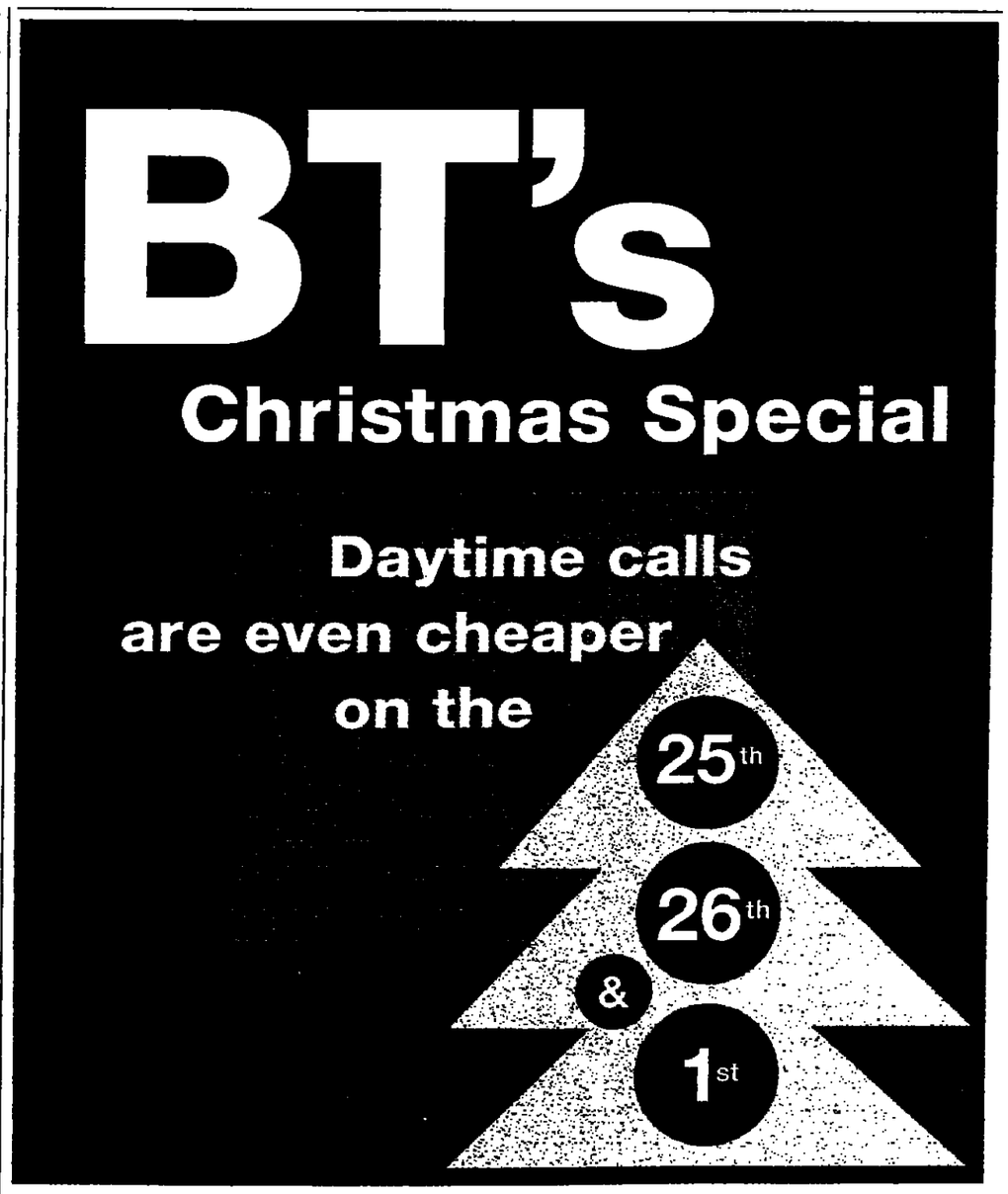
The Commissioners also say the Miners' Convalescent Home at Scalby outside Scarborough had wrongly required ex-mineworkers who had taken voluntary redundancy to keep up their union membership.

The controversy has flared up just as the battle for the survival of the rump of the privatised coal industry has come to a head. Earlier this month, the Government halted the building of gas-fired power stations and helped broker the extension of coal supply contracts to the power industry in response to the threat of further large-scale pit closures.

The electorate needs to feel, rather than be told, that things are getting better. Instead of being given a lecture, they want to observe the evidence all around them.

Linda Grant on the haemorrhage of Labour members

G2 page 14



On the 25th and 26th December 1997 and 1st January 1998, daytime BT calls will be at the appropriate weekday evening/night-time rates. This applies to all local, national and international calls, whether direct-dialled or operator-connected, as well as BT Chargecard.

BT It's good to talk...this Christmas

One-off £85m payout for BSE-hit beef farmers

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

FARMERS are to receive a one-off £85 million BSE aid package after a day of hard bargaining between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Treasury. The Government also announced details of an independent inquiry into the "disaster".

The final compromise came so late that the Commons statement due to be made by the Agriculture Minister, Jack Cunningham, at 3.30pm had to be delayed until 5pm.

Mr Cunningham confirmed yesterday's Guardian revelation of a radical scheme to cut down the number of beef farmers in the UK. As part of the deal, he had to promise to make a determined effort to reduce subsidies to the beef industry.

Mr Cunningham also told MPs that an independent inquiry into the origins and handling of the BSE crisis will be headed by Lord Justice Phillips and be completed before the end of next year.

Mr Cunningham maintained, amid Conservative scepticism, it was not intended as a witch-hunt against the Tory government. "Let me emphasise again that the aim is not to reopen old wound. Nor is it to make party political capital."

Farmers, badly hit by the BSE crisis, protested that the £85 million package, most of which will go to help farmers in the beef industry but some to the sheep industry, was nowhere near the £900 million they needed.

Bob Parry, president of the Farmers' Union of Wales, said: "He has only gone for a small amount — we believe the Government should have gone to Brussels for the full £980 million which is what is really needed to tackle the crisis in our industry. We still believe British taxpayers would be willing to help out."

But the National Farmers' Union president, Sir David Naish, welcomed the aid and also promised to co-operate with the BSE inquiry. He said the inquiry should not be used as an excuse to stall any easing of the EU ban on exports of British beef.

Mr Cunningham told the Commons that the Government had already committed substantial sums in support of the beef industry because of BSE: £2 billion in 1996/97 and £1.4 billion in 1997/98. "These are very large sums. They cannot be maintained indefinitely. There is oversupply of beef throughout Europe and a long-term decline in consumption."

He added that the Government's long-term aim was to reduce the scale of subsidy. "In future, there will be fewer producers but a more viable beef industry in the UK and Europe generally."

The Government will begin consultations with the industry on reducing herds, including an early retirement scheme for farmers.

The Conservative agriculture spokesman, Michael Jack, described Mr Cunningham's statement as chilling and accused him of proposing the unilateral run-down of the industry.

Mr Jack also questioned the wisdom of the BSE inquiry, saying it was an invitation to other European countries to delay even further lifting the ban on British beef.

Mr Cunningham, setting the terms of the inquiry, asked Lord Justice Phillips to investigate the emergence of BSE and the new variant of Creutzfeldt Jakob disease, which has cost 20 lives. He will also look at the first disclosure by the Government in March of the link between BSE and humans and the adequacy of that response.

The 59-year-old judge is best known for his handling of the complicated Barlow Clowes and Maxwell trials. In the Court of Appeal last year Lord Justice Phillips and Lord Woolf quashed the refusal of Michael Howard, then home secretary, to grant Mohamed Al Fayed and his brother citizenship, before the case went to the House of Lords.

Lord Justice Phillips: handled Maxwell trial

Schizophrenic whose illness was missed sent to high security hospital for repeatedly stabbing neighbour

Frenzied killer detained

A SCHIZOPHRENIC who escaped diagnosis for nearly a year before killing a neighbour in a knife attack was sent to Rampton high security hospital indefinitely yesterday.

Tolga Kurter, 20, admitted manslaughter while suffering from diminished responsibility. His plea of not guilty to murder was accepted at the Old Bailey.

Kurter, who was suffering from "bizarre delusions", had repeatedly stabbed taxi driver Nicholas Boyd, aged 43, near their homes in Islington, north London in April. He believed his victim, who died from multiple stab wounds to the heart, lungs and liver, was another man.

Mr Boyd's sister, Julie Fisher, said she felt angry that Kurter had been in a position to kill. "He should have been helped a long time ago."

Kurter had been seen by various medical practitioners last year but was not immediately diagnosed as schizophrenic.

Henry Kennedy, a consultant psychiatrist who yesterday recommended that Kurter should be detained in maximum security, said the clinicians may have acted "out of a proper caution" over making such a devastating prognosis. Kurter also took street drugs, which was an added complication. "Kurter is young and has severe mental illness complicated by the use of drugs. I think He is likely to require treatment in a maximum security hospital for at least the next five years."

Nicholas Boyd: stab wounds to heart, lungs and liver

Brian Altman, prosecuting, said that Kurter was hallucinating, deluded and thought disordered. His early life was disrupted by the death of his father in a road accident. While drug abuse may have exacerbated his condition generally, it played no part at the time of the stabbing.

After knifing Mr Boyd, he was hysterical and told his mother "I have just killed a man, Mum." But he gave her a different name to that of his victim.

Mr Altman said that Mr Boyd's family had "suffered greatly from his untimely death" and his sister, Julie Fisher, was in fear of Kurter.

A friend of Ms Fisher said after Kurter was sentenced: "No outcome could possibly have satisfied her. She now hopes he will not be out on the streets for a long time."

Kurter's counsel, Nicholas Price said he was not "an evil young man but a very sick man". It was "a matter of regret" that when Kurter visited hospital, a diagnosis was not made.

After the case Marjorie Wallace, chief executive of mental health charity SANE, said: "Yet again an innocent person loses his life and a seriously ill young man his liberty because those responsible for the care of Tolga Kurter, and the safety of the public, have failed in their duty to protect either."

SANE believed that most homicides and suicides by the mentally ill could be avoided.

Kurter had been a patient at the Waterlow psychiatric unit in Highgate, north London, which comes under the Camden and Islington Health Authority. Camden and Islington Community Health Services said that an independent inquiry was being set up and its findings would be made public.

The death of Mr Boyd came only weeks after an inquiry into the care received by Martin Mursell at the same hospital criticised hospital staff, housing officials and social workers.

Mursell was a patient at the unit in the period leading up to the attempted murder of his mother Mary Collins and the murder of his stepfather, Joseph Collins.

The Zito Trust, a mental health pressure group set up as a result of the killing of Jonathan Zito in 1992, demanded a government review of the health authority.

Apple tempts shy sisters into contemplation of virtual reality

Martin Wainwright

CONTEMPLATING over her Apple Mac computer, Sister Mary of the Carmelites is still trying to make up her mind whether to post a Christmas message on the enclosed order's new Internet website.

"It'd be a nice touch, wouldn't it," she says, "but my worry is that if I put a special message on, will I ever get round to taking it off when Christmas is over?"

The small IT problem is a minor glitch in the venture by the shy but spiritually powerful sisters into the world of cyber-chatting, e-mails and virtual convents.

The Carmelites' first rule-maker, patriarch Albert of Jerusalem, and their most famous mentor, St Teresa of Avila, left no specific guidance on a weapon of communication so awesomely powerful.

"But we do know that it can and should be used for good," says Sister Mary, who has pondered the role of global information in freeing, for example, the people of the former Soviet Union and apartheid South Africa. "There has been much discussion among Carmels about how to proceed, and we are very pleased to have our website at last — although to tell the truth, I'm finding this version a little slow."

From her convent at Dysart in Fifeshire, and liaising with Britain's 24 other Carmels, Sister Mary checked out her technology with her computer-minded brother in Australia. The convent also sought advice from lay friends in Scotland, who took a list of requirements which astonished the local computer dealers.

"Apparently they said: 'Surely one person can't want a computer to do all this'," says Sister Mary. "You see, we have our accounts, publications, graphics, the music we use and a host of other things as well as the website. They thought for a long time and then came up with the Apple."

Unlike its notorious biblical counterpart, which set Adam and Eve down the wrong track, the computer and its busy netlink is already proving a help to the sisters who spend their lives behind convent walls. The website has received rapid-response requests for prayers and is also spreading details of the order's work and way of life.

"We want to let people know we are here," said Sister Mary of St Michael, a former president of the Association of Carmels of Great Britain, who is also wired-up at a convent near Glasgow. "It isn't for recruiting, because the life of a nun is a vocation not a job, but there are people who seem to have forgotten that we exist.

"An Internet page puts us clearly on the map and shows that we can embrace new technology."

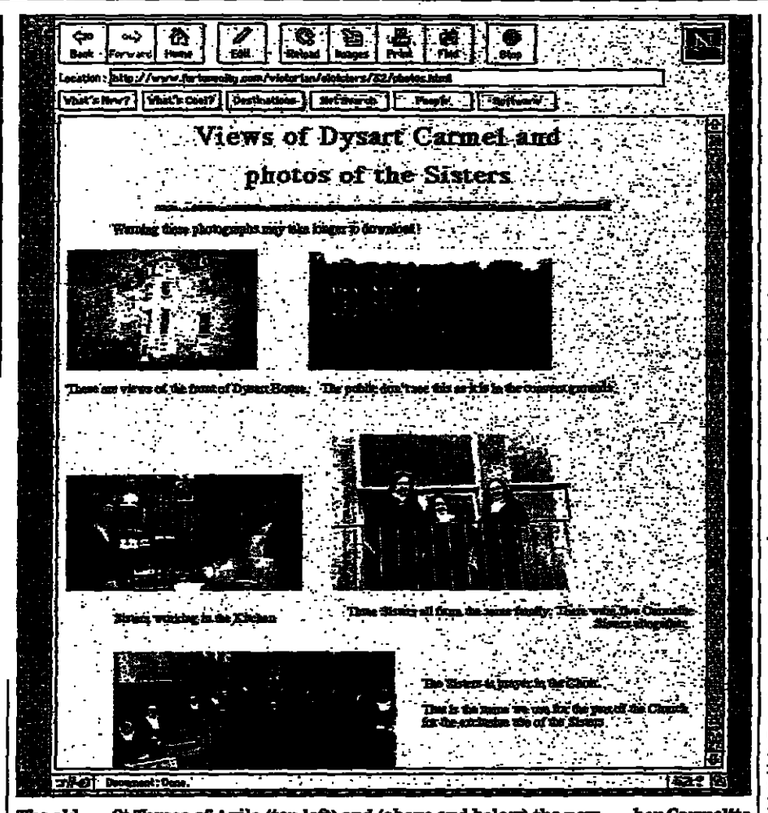
The website is relatively simple, but the Carmels are working on links to their fellow monastic Carmelite orders and counterparts in the United States, New Zealand and parts of Europe. Sister Mary in Dysart says: "We're still feeling our way, and I know there are lots of changes we will probably want to make to the site as we go along."

The order is also considering the implications of inviting the world into the home — albeit virtual home — of religious sisters whose essence since St Teresa's rules of 1562 has been an austere and contemplative, unworldly life.

"We will see how things work out, but many of the sisters — there are some 350 in Britain — are quite at home with computers," says Sister Mary.

"We're not expecting an avalanche of interest, but the website is already receiving hits. We've only just installed a webcounter and it's just got to 32."

The Carmels can be reached at: www.fortunecity.com/victorian/cloisters/32/index.html



The old . . . St Teresa of Avila (top left) and (above and below) the new . . . her Carmelite order on its Internet website which 'shows that we can embrace new technology'

Tuck in to that toxic turkey

Tim Radford, Science Editor

IF THE mere thought of all that cholesterol to come is clogging your arteries, there is yet more to fear. Environmentalists tell us that the turkey is toxic, the sprouts are downright sinister and the gravy could send you to an early grave.

With exquisite timing, — just after you have collected the bird — Friends of the Earth appear like spectres at the feast. They point out today that the parsnip soup is potentially poisonous: seven samples out of eight in 1996 contained organophosphate residues.

The turkey is likely to have been reared with four antibiotic feed additives. The boiled or roast potatoes nestling around the bird may contain fungicide, weedkiller or insecticide (23 per cent of samples in 1996 contained more than one of those things).

In 1994 the Ministry of Agriculture advised people to peel carrots because of organophosphate residues in the skin. Half of the sprouts tested in 1995 contained fungicides.

Skip the main course and go straight to the pudding? In 1996, 12 pesticide residues were found in 13 samples of mixed fruit, including four kinds of organophosphate. The butter in the brandy butter could contain lindane, and the nuts may have been fumigated with ozone-destroying methyl bromide, to be phased out in 2010. Three quarters of the chocolate samples had lindane residues.

Last year a biologist said the nutmeg in Christmas pudding contained a hallucinogenic alkaloid, the flour in it contained either beetles or preservative, and that about 20 per cent of all Christmas ham and sausage contained sulphadimidine.

Adrian Bebb of Friends of the Earth said the few organic turkeys to be had were too expensive. "I'm looking forward to Christmas dinner as much as anyone, and I think it is a shame that year in, year out we have to put up with food that is substandard."

He does have good news: the brandy contains nothing more sinister than alcohol.

Way of life under threat

'It's a one-off payment but farming is a long-term business and you can't live hand to mouth for ever'

Geoffrey Gibbs

TALK of industry restructuring was not what John Hodge wanted to hear from Jack Cunningham, the Minister of Agriculture when he listened to the minister's statement.

His is the fifth generation of the family to have farmed the high hills above Okehampton, Devon, and with his own son already steeped in the business he is determined to see their hill farming traditions maintained.

The Hodges, who keep sheep and a large herd of Belted Galloway beef breeding cows on the 1,000-acre Dartmoor farm, have shared in the general misery that has swept the industry since the BSE crisis broke last year.

Income has slumped, investment has had to be cut, and like other farmers in the region they were were disappointed at the size of the compensation package.

"It will help but it does not go far enough," said Mr Hodge.

"It's a one-off payment but farming is a long-term business and you can't live hand to mouth year on year."

Although Lower Halstock farm has had no cases of BSE among its herd, the Hodges have seen beef prices slump by 40 per cent over the past 18 months and they are expecting the annual accounts to show a further steep drop in the farm's income this year.

Two months ago they were forced with regret to shed their one full-time employee.

"All hill farmers are suffering and it's causing a lot of hardship.

"Everybody is cutting costs and reducing labour. You don't change machinery, and you look hard before you employ a vet. People are having to think twice on everything they do before they spend money."

Mr Hodge, 59, takes the view that the strong pound is mainly to blame for the industry's current woes, and is very keen to see Britain enter the single currency.

"We are not on a level playing field with the rest of Europe. We can't export because of the ban but the strong pound is encouraging imports into this country.

"We are losing all ways," he says. "If we don't join the single currency the agriculture and industry of this country will be finished."

He is also worried by Mr Cunningham's talk of the need for a substantial restructuring in Britain's agricultureal sector — proposals he fears could have a truely devastating impact on the rural landscape.

"The more people they get out of farming, the more business they will lose in the villages and the quieter the countryside will get.

"This country was built up with small farms and small businesses have kept it tidier than large ranch farmers.

"You have got to keep the young farmers interested in the hill areas where there is a unique way of farming.

"You can't read it out of a book and I hope the Government appreciates that.

"If the hills are not kept grazed and the stock is taken off them there is a danger that places like Dartmoor will turn into a wilderness."

Girl, 9, tells of Christmas rape

Duncan Campbell, Crime Correspondent

A NINE-YEAR-OLD girl's description of how she and her mother were raped at knifepoint last Christmas was released by police yesterday in a bid to solve a crime that has perplexed detectives for a year.

The girl and her mother were attacked while visiting relatives in Northolt, west London. The relatives had gone out for the evening and the pair were in the same bed in the house in Mandeville Road when a young man broke in just before 1am on Boxing Day. He held a knife to the woman's throat and raped her in front of her daughter. He then raped the girl, before stealing her £40 Christmas money.

Yesterday Detective Chief Inspector Heather Valentine, who is leading the investigation, said the statement made by the girl had been released to prompt someone who knows the attacker to come forward. A £5,000 reward has been offered by the Crimestoppers Trust for information that can lead to the rapist's conviction.

In the statement, the girl says: "Last Christmas, my mum and I went to stay with some of our relatives in Northolt. We had a lovely time on Christmas Day. I had some nice presents. I got a Spice Girls tape and we had a big Christmas dinner. I was allowed to stay up and I went to bed quite late.

"A little while after I had gone to bed, I woke up and saw a man in my bedroom. My mum was in the same room as me and I saw that the man was holding a knife up to my mum's face. I was so frightened I couldn't move or scream or do anything. I thought he was going to cut my mum or hurt her in some way. I couldn't call out for help or do anything to protect my mum. I was so scared that I just kept very still."

The girl recounts that she, too, was attacked despite screaming for the rapist to stop. "My mum tried to help but couldn't. The man still had a knife and I was frightened that he was going to kill me or my mum."

Computer image of rapist

DCI Valentine said she was sure that someone knew the identity of the man and called for people to come forward.

Police have a DNA profile of the attacker.

The man was described as white, 5ft 7ins to 6ft tall, slim built, with fair hair shaved at the back and longer on top. He was wearing a blue sweatshirt with the letters "USA" on the chest in red, a dark leather bomber jacket, jeans and new-looking white trainers, possibly a Christmas present.

Anyone with information should call 0800 555 111.

MP joins plea to silent estate to name killers

Chris Moller

THE father of a teenager beaten to death on a south London estate yesterday appealed for witnesses to overcome their fear of reprisals and help police find the killers.

An MP offered to act as a go-between, allowing residents to pass information to him if they did not want to be thought of as "grasses". Police believe many people know who the killers are, but are too frightened to come forward.

Simon Hughes, the Liberal Democrat MP, and police appealed yesterday for witnesses to the beating to death of 17-year-old Jamie Robe. He was killed by a gang of young men on August 7, suffering a fractured skull, split liver, ruptured kidney and broken ribs.

After a long drinking spree with a friend, Jamie was walking home along Lower Road, Rotherhithe, at around 1.20am. Three people standing outside the Surrey kebab takeaway laughed at him when he was sick in the street. He chased two of them briefly before they disappeared into the nearby Osprey estate.

As Jamie retraced his steps along Lower Road, a group of eight or nine men armed with a baseball bat, cricket bat, stump and snooker cues ran out of Osprey estate and attacked him as his companion ran off. He was discovered unconscious, after having suffered around 40 blows, near the Surrey Docks pub and was rushed to hospital but died at 2.30am.

Stuart Robe, Jamie's father, saw him later: "I couldn't recognise my son. His eyes were all cut. His nose was broken. His head was the size of a football. I asked the surgeon if he would have felt anything. He said no. He said that after the first blow to the head he was basically dead."

Det Insp Tony Cottis said there had been around eight attackers, and many people must know their identity. Police believe they know the identity of three or four of the men but have been given little hard information.

Eleven days after the murder, a witness walked into Rotherhithe police station at 4am and named a suspect but refused to give his own name. Other witnesses are frightened of reprisals. Mr Cottis said witnesses would be given assistance to move out of the area if they were afraid.

Jamie's father and sister Kellie, 26, and two brothers Stephen, 26 and Keith, 19 stuck home-made posters around the Osprey estate and Lower Road yesterday morning, with the message: "Our 17-year-old son was beaten to death on August 7, 1997. Please help our family. Phone 0181-284 9777 (police)". They were accompanied by police. Mr Robe has received an anonymous death threat.

Mr Hughes, the MP who lives a mile away, said anyone with information "need never be known in terms of what they say. I am happy that they come and talk to me confidentially."

هكذا من الاصل

In or or out in 1997? The contrasting hazards of becoming bigorexic, left, or promoting the heroin chic look, right. Inverted snobbery as the Chancellor does a Gordon Brown, below right, and definitely not an offliner

Unionist anger hits talks hopes

John Mullin
Ireland Correspondent

MO MOWLAM, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, was last night embroiled in an eleventh-hour attempt to keep the stymied talks on Nothern Ireland's future on track.

The meeting came as three suspected loyalists were arrested in west Belfast over their alleged part in a paramilitary demonstration two months ago. That served to upped the anger in the Protestant community over the showdown.

The row was also exacerbated when the Government announced that Pat Martin, 36, jailed over a plan to attack the electricity supply in mainland Britain, was sent back to Northern Ireland from a British jail.

Ms Mowlam was meeting the Progessive Unionist Party, linked to the outlawed paramilitary group the Ulster Volunteer Force. It is furious over what it sees as too many concessions designed to keep Sinn Fein involved in negotiations at Stormont.

There appeared little prospect of the PUP, seen as one of the mainstays of the talks, staying involved when the negotiations resume in January. It was smarting from the Irish government's decision to free nine IRA prisoners including the inmate believed to be behind the Guildford pub bombing in 1974.

It had just assured loyalist inmates that there would be no more favouritism to Sinn Fein when Dublin made its announcement.

The PUP's withdrawal from the talks would upset the balance of the so-called sufficiency of consensus rules, which require a majority of Unionist opinion at the Stormont talks to agree any deal.

The Democratic Unionist Party, led by Ian Paisley, and the UK Unionists, are already boycotting the negotiations. They represent close to 50 per cent of the Unionist vote.

Four Ulster Unionist Party MPs have also urged their leader, David Trimble, to pull out of the talks. In a letter to the chief whip, Martin Smyth, the four said they were "totally opposed" to the negotiations.

The MPs — William Ross, East Londonderry; William Thompson, West Tyrone; Roy Beggs, East Antrim and Clifford Forsythe, South Antrim — are long-term sceptics.

None of them are in the party negotiating team at the Stormont talks but their comments will be seen as a challenge to Mr Trimble. A fifth of the party's 10 MPs, Jeffrey Donaldson, who is in the talks team, suggested last week it was time for the party to reconsider their involvement.

Bertie Ahern, the Taoiseach, said he hoped that the British government could find a way to release loyalist prisoners. He believed it was important for confidence building measures to be applied across the divide.

The Government is this morning due to free 160 paramilitary prisoners for a ten-day Christmas parole. Among them will be Patrick Magee, 35, jailed for the Brighton bombing 13 years ago which left five dead at the Conservative Party conference.

The Ulster Democratic Party, linked to the outlawed paramilitary group the Ulster Freedom Fighters and the Ulster Defence Association, said it would remain at the talks, which resume in January. But it warned the negotiations seemed skewed against Unionist opinion.

What it means to be on-message and adultescent

John Ezard

YOU were IN during 1997 if you were an on-message, emotionally correct adultescent good at prebuttals and with enough inverted snobbery to Gordon Brown it.

You were OUT if you were a bigorexic, negaholic fluffragette offliner suffering from heroin chic and technoplegia. Either way, you had to be as adaptable as a chameleon if you strove to model your life on the newest buzz words and phrases of the year.

The commonest 100 of these — some of them just coined — emerged in a list issued yesterday by Oxford Dictionaries, which runs the world's biggest language monitoring programme.

"Emotionally correct", was spotted in Britain earlier this month in outpourings by the US-based English columnist, Christopher Hitchens. Its first usage appeared to be the previous month by an American columnist.

This month also generated "information addiction", relating to the Internet, "information fatigue syndrome" and "iris code", the use of a digital image of part of an eye as identification at cashpoints.

November launched three terms for the disorder suffered by bodybuilders, who think themselves puny, "bigorexia", "muscle dysmorphia" and "reverse anorexia".

In that month too, the verb "to Gordon Brown it" crept into English, though the Chancellor wore a lounge suit at the Mansion House as long ago as June 12.

New Labour has entrenched "on-message" in Britain all this year, after it was first traced in President Clinton's 1992 campaign. "Prebuttals", meaning anticipatory denials, are also outgrowths of New Labour. The only commonly found new Tory terms are "Hagueite", and "chicken run", the rush for safe seats under John Major.

"Adultescent", "Middle Youth", "mezzobrow" and "sandwich generation" are among a crop of words reflecting "our tendency to categorise each other socially more than we used to", according to Jenny Miell, senior assistant editor on the Oxford English Dictionary.

Buzz words of '97

On-message: you are for Labour Party policy.
Emotionally correct: an Orwellian phrase. You have learned to love Big Brother — you now feel as well as act politically correctly.
Adultescent or **Middle Youth:** you are a 35 to 45-year-old with interests typically associated with youth culture.
Negaholic: you are a compulsive negative thinker whose glass is always half full.
Fluffragette: you believe in pre-feminist role models.
Sandwich generation: you simultaneously look after growing children and ageing parents.
Offliner or **Internot:** you do not use the Internet.
Mezzobrow: you are middle-brow but in a fashionable and superior way.
Technoplegic: you suffer from paralysis induced by fear of using technology.
Economy Class Syndrome: you have a leg clot induced by prolonged sitting on planes.
Irishised: your pub has just been converted.
Blue pound: your main income is from pornography.

Social workers face shake-up

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

THE training body for social workers is to be wound up as part of the Government's plans to regulate the million people employed in social care.

Ministers announced yesterday that the body, which has been criticised for perpetuating "politically correct" values in social work, would be replaced under the plans.

The announcement is the first concrete step towards the creation of the long-awaited general social care council, which will regulate not only social workers but also home helps and other unqualified staff.

The social work training body, the 25-year-old Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, has faced repeated accusations that its training has produced social workers lacking commonsense values.

Friction between the council and Whitehall has stood in the way of social work achieving a three year training programme in common with most of the rest of western Europe, as opposed to the current two years.

Paul Boateng, the junior health minister responsible for social services, said a two month review had concluded that the CCETSW should be subsumed within a general social care council, details of which would be unveiled in a white paper next spring.

The council would make clear "the vital importance of drawing a close relationship between the regulation of training and of the work force", the minister said.

Although Mr Boateng's statement made no reference to it, it is assumed that the CCETSW will be converted into a national training organisation for social care.

Mr Boateng said the Government had decided to move straight to a white paper on the care council, rejecting the idea of further consultation on a proposal which has been on the table for around seven years.

Jeffrey Greenwood, chairman of the CCETSW, said: "We have long supported and worked towards the creation of an appropriate statutory regulatory body for the social services work force.

"We welcome the Government's determination to create such a body and believe it will improve public confidence in social workers and social care services."

UN supports Lockerbie trial in Scotland

Ian Black
Diplomatic Editor

THE United Nations has concluded that the Libyans suspected of the Lockerbie bombing nine years ago would receive a fair trial in Scotland, the Crown Office in Edinburgh said last night.

In a new attempt to resist mounting demands that the Government change tack to end the long-standing impasse in the case, a spokesman said Libya should stop "prevaricating" and deliver the suspects for trial by jury in Scotland.

The statement came in apparent response to a new plea by families of the British victims that the Government agree to a trial of the two Libyan suspects in a "neutral" country.

Two senior UN legal experts visited Scotland earlier this month to examine the legal system — part of an attempt by Britain to shift the blame squarely on to the Libyans.

But similar invitations to the Arab League and the Organisation of African Unity went unanswered. "We are particularly pleased to hear that they [the UN] concluded that a trial by jury would not prejudice the accused's right to a free trial," a Crown Office spokesman said.

Britain has always insisted that the two men, Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed Al Megrahi and Al Amin Khalifa Fhimah, whom it says were Libyan intelligence officers and for whom arrest warrants were issued in 1991, must be handed over for trial in Scotland or the US.

Expert on Antiques Roadshow hits a bum note

David Ward

NO ONE was suggesting that the man from the Antiques Roadshow was on the fiddle but a woman was shocked to hear that her prized violin, the one she regularly uses in church, was worth a mere £150.

Nothing special, sniffed the BBC expert when he visited Bolton, Lancashire, and gave Jane Mann's instrument the once-over. Just a cheap German export.

He showed rather more interest in a violin made by her father at a local evening class. Not a bad piece of work, he admitted. Almost certainly worth more than the other instrument.

But Ms Mann was not so sure and sought a second opinion on violin number one, whose sweet tone she cherishes. She was told that it was almost 200 years old and worth £10,000. A embarrassed BBC said yesterday that it was unable to discover which expert had played the metaphorical bum note.

"My father bought the violin for me in London when I was 12," said Ms Mann. "I had been learning since I was six and it was my first full-size violin. He paid £180 for it, which was quite a lot of money then — it was a mega present."

Paul Parsons, of the Manchester-based intrument restorers and dealers, David Vernons Violins, said: "It's not often that you come across an English instrument in such fine condition. In our opinion the violin was made in London and dates back to between 1800 and 1830."

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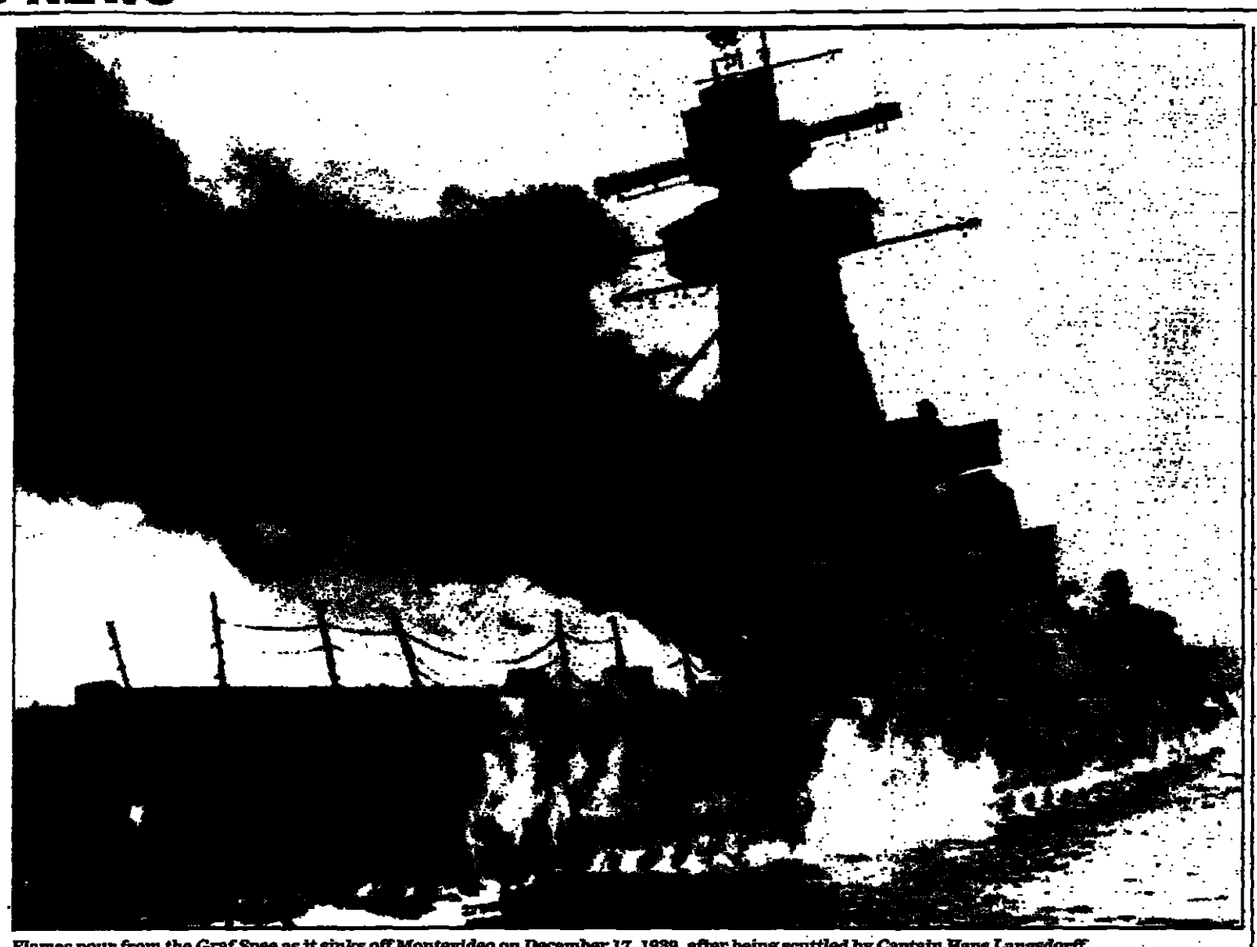
FUJITSU

It is 58 years since the pride of the German navy was scuttled in the River Plate, but the event made an indelible impression on Uruguay. A few survivors and a private museum still celebrate an emotive moment in wartime history

Phil Gunson in Montevideo reports



Flames pour from the Graf Spee as it sinks off Montevideo on December 17, 1939, after being scuttled by Captain Hans Langsdorff

Graf Spee legacy surfaces

WHEN Oscar Medina flies the swastika-adorned, second world war, German naval flag outside his private museum in the Montevideo suburb of Malvin, the neighbours tend to look askance.

But Mr Medina insists the act of homage is not to the memory of Adolf Hitler, but to that of Captain Hans Langsdorff of the pocket battleship Graf Spee, who shot himself in a Buenos Aires hotel 58 years ago this month after scuttling the pride of the German navy in the brown waters of the River Plate.

"He drank some Ballantine's whisky and smoked his last cigar before shooting himself on the flag," said Mr Medina, who keeps the remains of the cigar — La Fidr dé Dominicana brand — in a small glass jar at the Malvin maritime museum.

A former Uruguayan merchant mariner, Mr Medina arrived in Montevideo just three days before the Graf Spee to attend the naval academy. It was a chance encounter with history that remains etched on the city's memory more than half a century later.

The German vessel, then one of the most advanced warships in the world, was in Japan when war broke out in September 1939. On its way back to the North Atlantic it was intercepted by the Royal Navy, in the form of the cruisers Exeter, Ajax and Achilles, which damaged it so badly that it was forced to seek refuge — without permission — in neutral Uruguay.

Pressure from the British, who at the time controlled much of the Uruguayan economy, sealed Langsdorff's — and the Graf Spee's — fate.

Four days later, as around 200,000 people watched from the shore, the German warship left Montevideo harbour, turned sharply to starboard and dropped anchor about four miles offshore. Moments later, explosives placed below one of the main gun turrets tore it into two pieces, which remain where they sank in less than 30ft of water.

Oscar Medina holds up the remains of the captain's last cigar, a prize exhibit in his museum PHOTOGRAPH: PHIL GUNSON

"The blast was tremendous," Mr Medina said. "It shook the whole of Montevideo."

Lotte Claas, then aged 21, the daughter of German immigrants, had just left the crowd and boarded a bus on the Rambla, the city's waterfront boulevard. "We'd gone about two or three blocks when the bus shuddered with the explosion," she recalled.

When she got home, she saw the blazing ship from an upstairs window and burst into tears, assuming the crew had been killed.

In fact, the 1,055 officers and men were crammed into barges on their way to Buenos Aires, where most would spend the rest of the war as internees.

Thirty-six victims of the battle of the South Atlantic, all of them under 25, were buried in Montevideo, where the funeral had an enormous impact. "Even the soldiers who fired the salute were crying," said Mr Medina.

Ms Claas was among the members of the German community who responded to the embassy's request to visit the 60 wounded seamen who remained in Uruguayan hospitals.

She found herself beside the bed of ship's engineer Fritz Adolph, aged 20, one of whose legs had been mangled by a shell from the Exeter.

"He was in such bad shape that I told my sister, 'I'll have to come again. Who knows what will happen to the poor man?'."

Fritz recovered and married Lotte, whose two sisters also married Graf Spee survivors. This year, on the 58th anniversary of the battle, the seven survivors still in Uruguay were joined by a small group from about 200 who live in Argentina.

But in contrast to the hot sunshine of December 1939, cold winds and driving rain forced the cancellation of a trip to scatter flowers at the site of the wreck.

"They had decided, 'Let's do it for the last time'," said Mrs Adolph, only to be corrected by her husband, now aged nearly 80, "I'm sure they'll be back for the 60th."

US ignored warning on Gulf vaccine

Martin Kettle in Washington

MORE than 8,000 American troops were unknowingly injected with an unlicensed experimental vaccine having uncertain side-effects on the eve of Operation Desert Storm in 1991, despite a United States army review board's recommendation against doing so, a newspaper alleged yesterday.

The troops were injected with the pentavalent botulinum toxoid vaccine, meant to protect them against chemical and biological warfare, but now being studied as a possible source of so-called Gulf war syndrome.

The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported that just before the military assault on Iraq in January 1991, a US army review board warned against using the drug, except for experimental purposes. But the board's ruling was overridden by the Pentagon after military chiefs decided to inoculate the troops because of fears about President Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological weapons arsenal.

The newspaper published details from the transcript of an October 1990 meeting of the ethics committee at the army's biological defence research station at Fort Detrick, Maryland, which showed that army doctors were not sure the vaccine would protect the troops from illness.

The doctors told the committee that although laboratory tests on animals had shown promising results, they were uncertain whether the vaccine would work and whether troops on the move could be safely immunised.

The defence department disagreed. Army researchers told the committee that they did not want to tell soldiers about the vaccine for fear of causing panic, especially because there was not enough vaccine for all the US and allied troops.

More than 80,000 of the 600,000 US service personnel are now afflicted in varying degrees with Gulf war syndrome, which continues to be the subject of intense dispute, and possible litigation, in the US and elsewhere, including Britain.

Struggle over for Sandinista journal

Phil Gunson, Latin America Correspondent

BARRICADA, the newspaper of Nicaragua's Sandinistas (FSLN), is on the verge of collapse, signalling an undignified end of an era.

The paper, born out of the 1979 uprising against the Somoza dictatorship, can no longer afford to pay its employees, two of whom began a hunger strike at the weekend to demand their back pay.

The editor, Juan Ramón Huerta, was quoted as saying that yesterday's Barricada would be "the last in this phase ... A new project is being considered but it will have to be a different publication."

At the last minute, however, the FSLN's founder Tomás Borge, who controls the newspaper, had a change of heart, and granted a stay of execution.

Mr Borge has suggested that back pay will be met by the sale of the land on which the newspaper stands, but yesterday the staff, many of whom are owed three months salary, demanded more guarantees.

For many, the Barricada died three years ago, when the founding editor, Carlos Fernando Chamorro, was forced out by the FSLN's leaders for giving too much space to dissenting voices.

Critics pointed out that Mr Borge, the new chairman of the editorial board, had, as the Sandinista minister of the interior, been in effect the country's chief censor. He denied that the return to the party line would result in Barricada losing readers and advertisers, but cancellations began at once.

Burma's leading lady continues to hold her own against military might

Suzanne Goldenberg meets Aung San Suu Kyi, right, in her lakeside home in Rangoon from where, despite virtual house arrest, she remains the potent symbol of the opposition

THE signs are everywhere, in placid paddy fields and downtown Rangoon, red billboards screaming "Oppose those external elements acting as stooges, holding negative views."

Few in Burma are in need of an explanation. The target of the military junta's wrath is Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel prize laureate and opposition leader who in less than a decade has been transformed from political neophyte into international heroine, and perhaps the world's most famous political shut-in.

From the shores of Rangoon's Inya Lake, where Ms Suu Kyi, like Burma's ruling generals, has her home, she has tried to revive her National League for Democracy, cowed and dispirited in the face of the junta's relentless repression.

"I hardly go out. I do all my work from the house," Ms Suu Kyi told the Guardian in a rare interview conducted in a sparsely furnished room dominated by a portrait of her father, the hero of Burma's struggle against British colonial rule, General Aung San. "They make it impossible for me to leave Rangoon."

The grounds outside betray few signs that this is a home: the garden is neglected and the tall fence embellished with political posters.

Although Ms Suu Kyi was freed from six years under house arrest in July 1995, her movements are restricted.

Casual visits are rare; the plain-clothes police have been known to turn away ambassadors, and journalists are never knowingly allowed past the security cordon.

Ms Suu Kyi's outings are largely confined to lunches with friendly diplomats on an almost weekly basis. Although the military has refused to entertain a dialogue, her NLD is in quiet contact with the generals.

She is eager for news of the changes in Rangoon: the business complexes, nightclubs and hotels that have sprung up in the past year are unknown territory.

"I have never seen any of these shopping malls," she said.

Her present isolation is far removed from the privileges of her childhood as daughter of the martyr of Burma's independence struggle. Portraits of General Aung San, young and serious in his military cap and greatcoat, are still given pride of place in Burma, although successive military regimes have sought to rewrite his role.

"I suppose they want to play down the role of my father. But they have not been able to do that entirely. They can do anything they like to me, but they can't touch my father."

Unlike the other woman heirs to a political patrimony in Asia — India's Indira Gandhi, Bangladesh's Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto — Ms Suu Kyi has no memories of her father. He died too young to school her in politics.

She was just two years old when General Aung San was assassinated in July 1947, aged 32.

However, unlike Sheikh Hasina or Ms Bhutto, that violent death does not appear to haunt her. Lacking their imperiousness, she relies on a quiet charm to woo Western visitors and reduce even senior members of the NLD to diffidence.

"I never think I have to live up to my father's stature," she said.

"I am very proud of him, but I never thought I could reach the heights that he did. I accept that I won't be as good as him, so it is not a problem."

Her mother became Rangoon's ambassador to India when Ms Suu Kyi was 15 and much of her life since then has been abroad as the wife of an Oxford academic, Michael Aris.

The junta has used this against her. "They keep accusing me of being Western and non-Burmese because my husband is British, and they say I depend on foreigners," she said.

She is proud of her fluency in Burmese, professing not to understand how the elites of neighbouring Asian countries have lost their languages to English.

Her experience of political adversity is less than a decade old and follows her return to Rangoon to nurse her ailing mother.

The student unrest of 1988 catapulted her to the head of the NLD. But although she remains a heroine of a cowed populace, her exalted status means she cannot share their misery.

The junta has repeatedly sought to isolate her within the NLD and has quite effectively crushed the movement. Many of her followers have deserted her and the NLD network in Burma's countryside is so crippled, the opposition has become a one-woman show.

"In the minds of the people, Aung San Suu Kyi is herself the NLD, a potent symbol," said a diplomat in Rangoon.

The constraints on public activity have reduced Ms Suu Kyi to turning national holidays into political occasions. January 4 marks Burma's 50th anniversary of independence and Ms Suu Kyi is planning to invite more than 1,000 to her home for a day of speeches and celebration.

The Burmese regime has no plans to celebrate on a grand scale. While unlike the governments of India and Pakistan which have tried to turn their 50th birthdays into occasions of excitement, the Burmese regime is reserving the ceremonials for armed forces day in March.

Although Ms Suu Kyi will be impossible to ignore on January 4, and although she remains respected in the West, it may not be within her power to compel the military to come to the negotiating table.

"They are not at all anxious to give up power," said a diplomat in Rangoon.

"The question is whether world opinion together with the economic strictures will force the military in the coming months to change their attempts at cynical manipulation of their contacts with the opposition into something real."

A smiling Chun Doo-hwan, South Korea's former president, holds his grandson as he greets well-wishers on release from prison in Seoul yesterday. He and the ex-president Roh Tae-woo were pardoned by President Kim Young-sam PHOTOGRAPH: KIM JAE-HWAN

Nigeria prepares to make further coup arrests

Chris McGreal, Africa Correspondent

NIGERIA'S military government is poised to make a new wave of arrests following the detention of 11 senior officers accused of plotting to overthrow the country's dictator, General Sani Abacha.

A senior army source said the alleged plot extended beyond those already held. Detainees include Gen Abacha's deputy, three other generals and five colonels, in a round-up which exposes divisions within the army and the vulnerability of Nigeria's 54-year-old military ruler.

After the last conspiracy to overthrow the government two years ago, arrests continued for weeks. Secret military tribunals sentenced more than 40 people to long prison terms or death, later commuted to life imprisonment.

The government has provided no details or evidence for the latest alleged coup, leading some of Gen Abacha's opponents to conclude that the arrests were part of a purge.

Gen Abacha's deputy, General Oladipo Diya, was considered to be one of his most loyal supporters. He played a key role in installing Gen Abacha in power in the 1993 coup and proposed that he run for president in next year's elections.

It may be the poll which is behind the latest crisis. Gen Abacha says he is committed to holding a ballot for a civilian president but has encouraged the call for himself to run. The army is known to be divided between those who wish to extend military rule and those who believe it is in Nigeria's interests to return to civilian government.

Although Gen Diya was publicly urging an Abacha candidacy, he and most of the other officers detained on Saturday night are Yorubas from south-western Nigeria where the pressure for genuinely free elections is greatest.

Gen Diya's influence had waned in recent months, particularly after a cabinet reshuffle last week in which several of his allies — including two of the generals arrested on Saturday — were sacked. But Nigeria's ruler appears vulnerable, amid reports that he is suffering from a life-threatening illness.

Few people have much faith in Gen Abacha's route to democracy, and there was a poor turnout for the first bout of regional elections. The army decides which political parties can exist — it has legalised five — and whom they may pick as their presidential candidates. Three of the parties say they will back Gen Abacha.

Gen Abacha has largely stifled public dissent. Nigeria has substantial numbers of political prisoners. Since the detention of the 1993 election winner, Moshood Abiola, and the crackdown on protests which followed, most opposition supporters have decided to bide their time.

هكذا من الأصل

Raid rocks Caucasus truce

James Meek in Moscow

NEW doubts were raised yesterday about the Russian government's control of its strategically important North Caucasus region when a small group of unidentified guerrillas carried out a raid on an army base in a supposedly safe area, blowing up two tanks and five lorries.

Conflicting reports spoke of two civilians being killed in the raid and a policeman dying in a separate attack by another gang further north.

The Russian security services said the attackers were from Chechenia, the North Caucasian territory which won *de facto* independence from Moscow in a war that ended last year.

The ease with which the fighters were able to reach the government army base at Buynaksk in Dagestan, 30 miles east of the Chechen border, wreak havoc and then withdraw will alarm the Russian government.

The guerrillas travelled openly in a lorry and two cars, carrying assault rifles, machine guns and rocket launchers — an echo of the Chechens' raid on the Russian town of Budyonnovsk in June 1995 when a convoy of fighters travelled 100 miles without being stopped.

Estimates of the number of fighters in yesterday's raid ranged from 30 to 100. They struck at 2.30am and after a two-hour firefight made their way back towards Chechenia, taking hostages as they went.

Russian interior ministry sources said last night that one group of fighters had slipped back into Chechenia while another group, holding five policemen hostage, was being blockaded by Russian troops near the border.

The Chechen deputy prime minister, Movladi Udugov, denied Russian reports that the commander of the Chechen national guard, Magomed Khambiyev, was among a handful of fighters captured during the raid.

Mr Udugov said Chechenia had nothing to do with the raid and that the failure of the Russian authorities to deal with the armed band in the territory around Buynaksk was highly suspicious.

"The absolutely uncontrolled situation in Dagestan, when large armed groups can move freely through a region crammed with Russian troops and special forces, prompts the thought that certain circles in Moscow know of and approve these actions," he said.

The raid has embarrassed the Russian government, which maintains that the entire North Caucasus, including Chechenia, is ruled by Moscow.

It is also a further humiliating example of the ineffectiveness of federal security forces in those parts of the Northern Caucasus, such as Dagestan, which do not want independence but resent outsiders' interference in their affairs.

Federal troops from northern regions of Russia find themselves isolated among mainly Muslim Caucasians speaking any one of 40 local languages instead of Russian.

The lawlessness of the region is highlighted by a wave of kidnappings in Chechenia and neighbouring regions. Two Britons, Jon James and Camilla Carr, are being held in Chechenia, though a visiting British MP, David Willets, said yesterday that he had been assured by Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov that they would be released soon.

In North Ossetia, local gangsters conspire against the federal authorities to smuggle bootleg spirits into Russia. In Dagestan, caviar poachers are thought to have been responsible for a bomb which killed 67 border guards and their families a year ago.

The only working pipeline from the Caspian oilfields being developed by mainly Western consortiums runs through Dagestan and Chechenia, and Russia is anxious to show the route is reliable.

Defiant Yeltsin back at work

PAYING little heed to his doctors, President Boris Yeltsin said yesterday that he had fully recovered from a severe cold and would return to work at the Kremlin today, Russian news agencies reported.

"I have no traces of illness," Mr Yeltsin said at the start of his meeting with the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, at the Barvikha sanitarium where he has been treated for an acute respiratory viral infection since December 10.

Mr Yeltsin said on Thursday that he was leaving the sanitarium but the next day his doctors told a news conference that he should remain there for another five to seven days.

Mr Yeltsin, aged 66, has been in hospital three times in the past year. — *AP*.

Bosnia thanks Clinton as US agrees to stay

Ian Black
Diplomatic Editor

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton urged the people of Bosnia to take their future into their own hands yesterday when he visited Sarajevo and told the leaders of the country's three ethnic groups to bury their differences to make peace work.

In a one-day visit to the war-scarred capital, Mr Clinton was cheered by hundreds of people for his decision to let US forces stay in Bosnia indefinitely to help bolster the US-brokered 1995 Dayton agreement.

Later he saw some of the 8,500 American troops serving with the Nato-led Stabilisation Force, only days after admitting that it had been a mistake to set a timetable for their withdrawal.

In an emotional address in Sarajevo's ornate National Theatre the president declared: "I come before you with a message for those in whose hands the future of Bosnia lies — its leaders and its people. For in the end the future is up to you, not to the Americans, not to the Europeans and not to anybody else."

Mr Clinton said leaders had to rise to their responsibility to make peace work, but warned: "Those who shirk it will isolate themselves."

He thanked the Muslim chairman of Bosnia's three-man collective presidency, Alija Izetbegovic, and Croat member Kresimir Zubak, but conspicuously did not name the Serb member, Momcilo Krajisnik, who has been accused of hampering the work of the joint body.

More than two years after the Dayton agreement, Bosnia remains divided between the Serb Republic and the Muslim-Croat federation, which have yet to reach agreement on a national flag or currency.

As he walked through Sarajevo's old town with his wife Hillary and daughter Chelsea, people hugged the US president, squeezed his hand and said: "Thank you, thank you."

Mr Clinton was in Bosnia in January 1996 but besieged Sarajevo was not deemed safe enough for him to visit.

Later yesterday he took a military flight to the north-eastern town of Tuzla to meet American servicemen.

Mr Clinton's warm reception was assured after he said last week he would not set a deadline for a pullout — opting instead for a set of "concrete benchmarks" to measure whether enough progress had been made to end the Nato presence.

The president has attached conditions to American participation, saying the US must retain command of the Nato force, that it must be big enough to defend itself and achieve its mission, and that European allies take on a greater share of the cost.

Britain and other European countries pressed Mr Clinton to keep the US military in Bosnia, saying the 33,000-strong international peacekeeping force could collapse if the Americans leave. Security in Sarajevo was the heaviest in memory, with police stationed every 20-30 yards along the motorcade's route.

● Serbia's election commission said yesterday that the Socialist candidate, Milan Milutinovic, had won elections for the republic's presidency. But the credibility of his victory was marred by vote-rigging allegations. The commission said Mr Milutinovic, an ally of the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, won 58.6 per cent of the vote in Sunday's second round run-off compared with 38.14 per cent for the Radical Party leader, Vojislav Seselj. Yugoslavia comprises Serbia and Montenegro.

Leader comment, page 8

Bosnians greet President Clinton during his walkabout in the centre of Sarajevo on his first visit to the city yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: STEPHEN JAFFE

New Marie Antoinette opera evokes sex and violence at French court

The queen, unhappy in her marriage to the impotent Louis XVI, had a 19-year affair with a Swedish count which almost changed the course of the Revolution. **Stephen Weizman** in Stockholm reports on a musical drama

Marie Antoinette and Axel von Fersen: a love story, court life and the French Revolution – perfect ingredients for opera

WHEN Stockholm takes over from the Greek city of Salonica in January as Europe's cultural capital for a year, one of the first events to be staged will be a new opera telling the true story of Marie Antoinette's long and tempestuous affair with a Swedish nobleman, Axel von Fersen.

Combining sex and violence with the colour and spectacle of court life and the drama of the French Revolution, the story has such perfect ingredients for opera that one can only wonder that no composer attempted it before Daniel Boertz created Marie Antoinette for the Swedish Folkopera.

Von Fersen met the French queen at a ball in Paris in January 1774. She was frustrated in her marriage to the short-sighted, unattractive and impotent Louis XVI and fell quickly and violently in love with the handsome young Swedish count.

To ensure that he was able to remain at the French court she had the King of Sweden put pressure on Von Fersen's father to finance his stay. The affair lasted for 19 years and Von Fersen fathered the queen's son, the duke of Normandy.

The opera's dramatic peak comes with the storming of the Bastille and the growing danger to the royal family. Von Fersen arranges to smuggle the family to safety, almost changing the course of history, but Louis is loath to accept the help of his rival and once outside Paris he orders the Swede to leave them. "The count has already done more than enough, we are out of danger now," he sings.

Shortly afterwards the royal party is discovered by republicans and taken back to Paris and eventual execution. Von Fersen also died violently, back in Stockholm in 1810, where political enemies spread rumours that he had poisoned Sweden's Crown Prince Gustav. He was stoned to death by a mob outside the royal palace.

Boertz and the director, Claes Fellbom, were able to draw on Von Fersen's diary, the transcript of Marie Antoinette's trial and many letters between the couple. They believe that the lovers' last moments were eased by their love.

"It was that love which helped Marie Antoinette to take the last steps to her execution and which enabled Axel von Fersen to meet his ugly end with composure and dignity," Boetz says.

Marie Antoinette opens in Stockholm on January 24 and begins a European tour in Brighton in May, going on to Copenhagen, Heidelberg, Vienna, Innsbruck and Lisbon. Baritone Olle Persson sings the part of Von Fersen. Katarina Nilsson and Christina Hoegman alternate as Marie, and Fredrik Zetterstroem plays the king.

Bomb follows article on ETA

Reuters in Bilbao

THE home of a journalist working for the Spanish newspaper El Mundo was fire-bombed early yesterday after she published a story on the whereabouts of a fugitive linked to Basque separatist rebels.

Supporters of the Basque separatist group ETA were suspected of carrying out the attack on Carmen Gurruchaga's home in the city of San Sebastián.

No one was injured, Ms Gurruchaga said, though she and her children had been at home when the explosion occurred. "We are fine but it was horrifying."

She said the attack was probably related to her front-page story in Sunday's El Mundo on the fugitive Mikel Otegi, a Basque youth who admitted killing two policemen but was acquitted by a jury in a controversial trial in February.

The paper said he had been discovered in Cuba and might be receiving support from ETA exiles there.

In June, a Basque court overturned the acquittal and ordered a new trial. Basque officials said they suspected jurors had acquitted Mr Otegi for fear of reprisals by ETA. He disappeared in July.

ETA, which stands for Basque Homeland and Freedom, has killed more than 800 people in a 29-year campaign for an independent Basque state.

Spanish officials could neither confirm nor deny Mr Otegi's presence in Cuba.

Ms Gurruchaga has been the target of protests by ETA supporters in the past, though she said she had never received direct threats from ETA.

ETA's political wing, Herri Batasuna, demonstrated in front of her house in January, accusing her of publishing lies about radical separatists in the Basque country.

A pro-ETA prisoners' group denounced El Mundo's editorial line and said it would have consequences in the Basque country.

● El Mundo's editor, Pedro Ramirez, who has been caught up in a sex video scandal, had better luck yesterday, winning 14.4 million pesetas (£58,000) in the biggest lottery of the year, El Gordo (the big one).

Mr Ramirez said he was the victim of a smear campaign after the secretly-filmed video emerged showing a man in a corset and stockings attended by a woman using various sexual aids. He has not confirmed or denied he is the man in the video.

World news in brief

Turkey and Greece in tit-for-tat spy row

TURKEY and Greece announced tit-for-tat expulsions of diplomats yesterday in a spy row that signals a worsening of strained relations between the two.

Turkey said it had asked Athens to withdraw an administrative diplomat at the Greek consulate in Istanbul for "activities incompatible with his status". The foreign ministry spokesman, Sermet Atacanli, said: "He was engaged in intelligence-gathering operations."

Greece strongly denied the accusation and vowed to retaliate. "The Turkish claims are false," said the Greek government spokesman, Dimitris Reppas, in Athens. He said Athens would expel a Turkish diplomat of equal rank in the next few days.

The two countries have been at loggerheads over Cyprus, military tension in the Aegean and Turkey's faltering attempts to join the European Union. — *Reuters, Ankara.*

No case against Italian PM

AN Italian judge ruled yesterday that the prime minister, Romano Prodi, would not stand trial for his role in a controversial food group privatisation before he took office, saying charges of alleged wrongdoing did not stand up.

"The judge decided not to proceed with the case against Prodi and the others charged because there is no case to answer," his lawyer, Paola Severino, said at the courthouse in central Rome.

Judge Eduardo Landi's decision ends a year-long committal hearing considering prosecution requests to put Mr Prodi on trial for abuse of office and conflict of interest when he was chairman of the state holding, IRI, in 1993. — *Reuters, Rome.*

Lithuanians reject the past

LITHUANIANS turned their backs on Vytautas Landsbergis, the country's independence hero, in Sunday's presidential election and voted for two political novices with no links to established parties.

Final figures issued yesterday showed that Arturas Paulauskas, aged 44, who topped the poll with 45 per cent, would face Valdas Adamkus, a 71-year-old Lithuanian-American, in a run-off for the largely ceremonial post on January 4.

Mr Landsbergis, who led the former Soviet republic to independence in 1991, polled 16 per cent. — *Reuters, Vilnius.*

Ranariddh plans comeback

PRINCE Norodom Ranariddh, Cambodia's deposed co-prime minister, plans to return to his homeland on January 15, a top aide said yesterday. Government officials, however, said he faces arrest on arrival in Phnom Penh.

The prince, who has been out of the country since he was ousted by Hun Sen, the co-prime minister, on July 6, will return to prepare for next year's elections, the prince's special representative, Lu Laysreng, said.

But the chief of Phnom Penh's military court said Prince Ranariddh would face arrest on his arrival in the capital on charges of smuggling weapons and colluding with Khmer Rouge guerrillas. — *Reuters, Phnom Penh.*

Greenpeace blocks ship

ANTI-NUCLEAR activists chained themselves yesterday to a ship in Bremerhaven harbour, north-west Germany, carrying plutonium bound for a nuclear reprocessing centre in Scotland, the environmental organisation Greenpeace said.

The demonstrators are trying to prevent the Arneb from leaving with 130lbs of plutonium. The seven Greenpeace activists chained themselves to the vessel at 2.30 am and were supported by three Greenpeace dinghies blocking the ship.

The plutonium is headed for the Dounreay reprocessing plant in Scotland. — *Reuters, Bonn.*

China attacked for 'alien rule'

THE respected International Commission of Jurists said yesterday that Tibet was "under alien subjugation" and called for a United Nations-run referendum to decide its future status.

The Geneva-based body, which works to defend the rule of law worldwide, said in a 365-page report that the autonomy Beijing argues is enjoyed by Tibetans was fictitious and that real power lay in Chinese hands.

"It is to maintain its alien and unpopular rule that China has sought to suppress Tibetan nationalist dissent and extinguish Tibetan culture," said the ICJ secretary-general, Adama Dieng, in an introduction to the report. — *Reuters, Geneva.*

Stalin's little black book

THE grandson of Joseph Stalin offered a gift on the 118th anniversary of the dictator's birth on Sunday: a book containing names and pictures of Stalin's enemies.

Yevgeny Dzhugashvili, a 59-year-old former Soviet army colonel, lashed out at journalists and historians who "denounce and deride" Stalin in an interview on Georgian television broadcast yesterday.

One copy of the book will be stored at Stalin's museum in his native town of Gori and another one will be at the Tbilisi headquarters of a movement for Stalin's legacy which Mr Dzhugashvili heads. — *AP, Tbilisi.*

Mir: the disaster movie

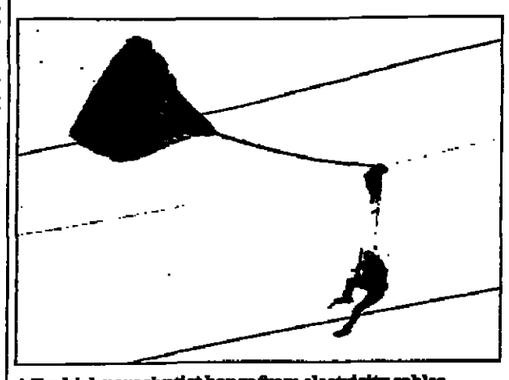
TRYING to drum up support for his plan to make a film aboard the Mir space station, the Russian film director, Yuri Kara, announced yesterday that three actors have passed medical tests for going into orbit.

Mr Kara is pushing to make a film before Mir is discarded in about two years.

The plot is set in 1999 and the Russians are abandoning the spacecraft. But there is a snag: a renegade cosmonaut insists on remaining aboard, declaring that he would orbit the Earth for the rest of his days. Ground controllers decide to send up a woman to lure him back.

The film would need at least $20 million to send two actors to Mir and millions more to finish. Mr Kara claimed yesterday that he has already found enough backers. — *AP, Moscow.*

Caller left on the line



A Turkish parachutist hangs from electricity cables during high winds in Samsun, on the Black Sea. He was rescued after calling his brother on a mobile phone

Baby seat saves child's life

A TWO-month-old boy, whose mother accidentally left him on top of her car in an Illinois town, fell off into a busy intersection when she drove away.

The infant, who was strapped into a car seat, suffered cuts and scrapes but was not severely injured. Police Sergeant Gene Klimek, of Tinley Park, said on Sunday: "It looks like the baby seat really did its job." — *AP, Tinley Park.*

The **Guardian**
Tuesday December 23 1997
Edition Number 47054
119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER
Fax No. 0171-837 4530
E-mail: letters@guardian.co.uk
Website: http://www.guardian.co.uk

Putting out the bush fire

First, exclude disability from short term cuts

BELATEDLY, a fireman has finally emerged through the benefit bushfire smoke. Tony Blair is taking over welfare reform. The Prime Minister will be personally in charge of the ministerial group examining benefit payments. Perhaps at last the Government will speak more coherently about its ambitions but the current incoherence is mainly the Prime Minister's fault. He set up too many conflicting reviews of social security — pensions, tax and benefits, longterm welfare restructuring, — and should never have placed a minister as weak as Harriet Harman in charge of social security. By refusing to protect one parent families from Treasury imposed benefit cuts, the Social Security Secretary fatally damaged the Government's important longterm welfare review. The public no longer has any trust in ministers. Ministers have been issuing pre-emptive — and contradictory — denials about future disability plans but all to no avail. They are no longer believed as yesterday's protests by disabled people outside Downing Street forcefully demonstrated.

Ministers have still failed to clarify whether they are pursuing a moral crusade (work is good, welfare dependency wrong) or a reluctant cost cutting exercise to conform with Tory spending proposals which they pledged they would follow for the first two years. Just as they could never decide the precise purpose of the one parent benefit cuts, so too they have entered the same swampy ground with their review of disability benefits. Initially, the Guardian's report last month that ministers were considering radical changes to disability benefits was dismissed as "a scare story". Then, when a document leaked this month from the social security department talked of ministers being forced to make "substantial savings" in disability benefits, it was dismissed as a working paper for officials rather than ministers. Now, with the weekend leak of a forceful letter from David Blunkett to Gordon Brown, we know differently. Ministers are deeply involved — and deeply divided — over proposed disability cuts. Mr Blair is facing his most serious cabinet split.

The Prime Minister needs to move promptly. First he must put out the bushfire before it spreads any further. This can be done by excluding disability benefits from any short-term cuts to fund current education and health reforms. David Blunkett was right to reject such "dirty money". The sooner the Prime Minister makes this declaration, the sooner ministers can turn to their longterm goal. The Tory spending plans, with only 15 months to run, have little relevance here. What is needed is a coherent message about the purpose of the longterm programme. Is it cost containment or a moral crusade? Then we need a full public debate — before, not after the cabinet committee has taken its decision.

Mr Blunkett's opposition is important. He is a known moderniser. He has rightly supported the welfare-to-work programme for single parents, young people and longterm unemployed. He wants more disabled people to move from welfare to work but has rightly reminded his colleagues that the prospects here are more limited: two out of three are already retired and others too severely disabled to work. The new leak has provided us with Mr Blunkett's detailed analysis of the Government's proposals on three key benefits: disability living allowance, incapacity benefit, and industrial injuries benefit. But we do not have the original paper to which Mr Blunkett was replying. Under the proposed Freedom of Information Bill all factual analysis papers would be released. The Prime Minister should order their release now so there can be a properly informed public debate.

Bosnia's life extension

Abandoning the peace midstream would be unforgivable

US PRESIDENTS dont often admit they got it wrong, and Bill Clinton should be congratulated on putting things right — in the end — over Bosnia. Last week he scrapped the previous deadline on keeping US troops in the Nato stabilisation force. Nor did he set a new deadline, explaining instead that "I don't want to make that error again." Yesterday he visited Sarajevo for himself — a much-needed reminder in a world more concerned with Asian finance that the Balkan crisis has not gone away. The flag-waving might seem overdone, but the mood among Bosnians who feel on the fringe of international attention was genuine enough.

The root of the problem lies in the mixed success with which the Dayton agreement has been implemented. Its military aspects (establishing a ceasefire, isolating heavy weapons etc.) have proceeded quite smoothly. Bosnia is safer and more peaceful — no small achievement in itself. But on the civilian side there has been no progress at all towards building stable relationships between the two rival "entities", let alone towards recreating a multi-ethnic spirit. Continued stability depends upon the continued presence of an international force, under whatever name is preferred. To set a deadline is to provide an incentive for one or other party to bide its time waiting for the chance to violate the agreement with impunity. Quiet advocacy from Britain has played its part in convincing Mr Clinton that the risk is too high.

Mr Clinton still has to present Congress with a strategic rationale for extending the US presence, but he has improved his credibility by taking a strong line rather than apologising for the decision. He has told those who believe that the peace effort is doomed that they are "profoundly wrong." It *may* still end in failure, but nothing is pre-ordained and to abandon the effort in midstream would be unforgivable — or at least never forgiven by the Bosnians who would suffer first. Yesterday in Sarajevo, Mr Clinton also told them that "in the end, the future is up to you." That is true, but it can only be said credibly if not accompanied by the washing of international hands.

How to move forward in implementing the civilian provisions of Dayton is much harder. Arresting Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic on war crime charges would be entirely justified but could sharpen rather than reduce the divisions between the rival ethnic entities. The hope appears to be that the commitment of the Nato forces "for the long haul" will undermine the hardline Bosnian Serbs more indirectly. The bridging of differences between the US and the European participants which Mr Clinton's commitment represents has also bridged a gap which the extremists might hope to exploit. No one knows if the Dayton goal is really achievable, but the only way to find out is to keep trying. If this society can be rebuilt, it will take time — and at least it now has an extension of life.

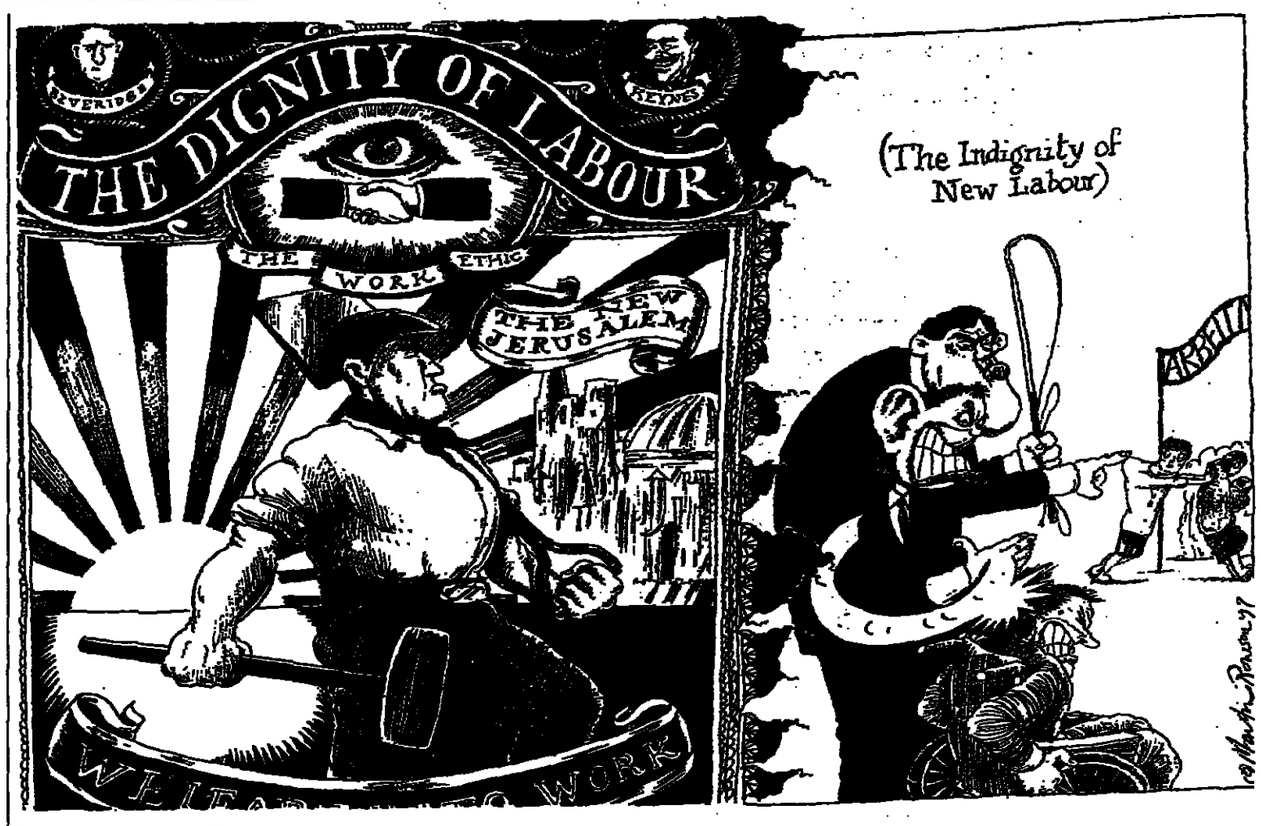
The Spice Girls: an apology

There is Too Much evidence that we got it really wrong

TODAY the Guardian feels a little like the Decca executive who rejected the Beatles, or the Hollywood casting director who saw a young hoofer called Fred Astaire and declared: "Can't act, can't sing — can dance a little." Now the Spice Girls are Number One for the second Christmas in a row, we fear we might have made a similarly grevious mistake. Just last month, we joined the Jeremiahs of the music industry in wondering if the quintet were about to go the way of Bros, the Bay City Rollers and New Kids On The Block. "Beginning of the end for girl power?" we asked in this very column, the day after Scary, Posh, Ginger, Baby and Sporty had clubbed together to sack their (male) manager. The Spices had just been toppled from the Number One spot, their album tepidly reviewed and the girls themselves booed off the stage in Spain. It all looked bleak.

But that was then. Now the talk is of a showbiz phoenix arisen from the ashes. Not only is the current hit, Too Much, top of the pops, critics whisper that it might even be a decent song. Another heresy has surfaced: the once-derided Sporty Spice appears to have the beginnings of a voice. Maybe the Spiceworld movie, due out on Boxing Day, is not a glorified video, but a "madcap pop romp" in the tradition of Summer Holiday and A Hard Day's Night. Maybe Ginger isn't as old as she looks.

Of course, cynics will accuse the Guardian of typical media fickleness, blowing with the wind of fad and fashion. But they would be wrong. As our Prime Minister himself has proved, an institution which changes its mind merely proves its flexibility and modernity. We remain true to the principles of our earlier leader, even if they have produced a wildly different stance now. We will not back down. We congratulate the Spice Girls on their success.



Letters to the Editor

On the art of survival

YOU are quite correct to draw attention (Leader, December 20) to the convenient myopia of politicians who ignore the fact that the arts and cultural industries earn this country vastly more than they cost to support. I smile wryly when asked how much this theatre is granted from the Arts Council (and *ipso facto* from central government) given that we will pay some £55,000 this year in VAT alone, and will receive not a penny from the Arts Council or Eastern Arts Board. Are we propping up the Treasury rather than the other way round?

If the Government chose to zero-rate ticket sales by non-profit-making arts promoters — or at least set a rate lower than standard theatres — demands on the under-funded Arts Council would reduce overnight. And can it now really be argued that such sales are conceptually any different to the sale of books, or entrance fees to educational events, which are already zero-rated?
Jon Harris.
General manager,
Harlow Playhouse,
Harlow,
Essex CM20 1LS.

YOU warn that the Government might find itself presiding over a "work-to-welfare" scheme in the arts, when in fact it already has. The thousands of jobs that support the arts — administrators, funders, civil servants, reviewers — exist because artists in all fields are expected to work without being paid for several years early in their careers.

When I left university in 1992, the unwritten but widely quoted rule was that theatre companies were expected to work for two or three years before they could hope to get paid. Now it is considered to be four or even five years. Try explaining that to your local DSS office when they stop your Job Seeker's Allowance because you should be willing to change career after 13 weeks of unemployment.

Of course, the Lottery's Arts For Everyone express scheme has illustrated the problems of throwing thousands of pounds at new groups with no track record, as hordes of groups set up when they scented easy money. The problem here is that the arts were expected to respond to the demands of the funding scheme, when it should be the other way round.

At the same time, the Arts For Everyone main programme completely missed the point of the arts crisis by demanding an element of additionality in projects submitted to it. Artists can't afford to do what they already do, let alone come up with a new project. But of course they try, and spend a great deal of time (unpaid for the majority of them) working on bids that statistically have less than a 5 per cent chance of success.

The real subsidy of the arts comes from the thousands of artists who work for nothing or next to nothing. It is time that the Government recognised this, rather than just basking in the glory of the comparatively minority success of British music and film, which has been achieved despite, not because of, the "support" offered to it.
Alexander Kelly.
Co-Artistic director,
Third Angel,
5 Brown Street,
Sheffield S1 2BS.

QUITE rightly your Leader identifies the need for seed corn investment and a sustainable strategy for the arts — a cultural policy for the next century as opposed to stop-gap contingencies.

What needs to be recognised is not only the cultural return and direct boost to the balance of payments, but the less visible returns. The benefits the arts bring — enjoyment, a sense of identity, inquiry, the understanding of other peoples, moral insight.

The economic equation is not a difficult one — if the public mourning which followed the death of Princess Diana led to a decrease in expenditure on psychiatric services for the depressed, disenfranchised and lonely, a positive lesson must be that investment in the unquantifiable is a wise investment.
Hilary Gresty.
Director, Visual Arts and Galleries' Association,
The Old Village School,
Witcham, Ely CB6 2LQ.

From the swelling ranks of ex-Labour Party members

YOUR article on dwindling Labour membership figures (Labour concern over plummeting membership, December 20) came as no surprise to me. A member of the Labour Party for over 20 years, I was surprised when, just over a year ago, I received a phone call from Walworth Road asking if I would consider a more effective way of paying my subscription.

Since I was already paying by direct debit, I found it difficult to see what could be more effective, but I accepted the offer of an information pack explaining the new process.

Imagine my surprise when this new method involved paying considerably more money. I was already uneasy about certain developments in the party, and this merely confirmed many of my fears. Worst of all was a statement in the pack that said "We are unable to enter into correspondence in this matter". I wrote to Tony Blair expressing my disquiet and he was true to his word — he did not enter into correspondence. I wrote to my local constituency party, and received an equally silent response.

Instead of paying more (effectively or otherwise) in 1997, I cancelled my direct debit and resigned. I wonder how many others had similar experiences?
Phil Rowe.
56 Vicar's Moor Lane,
London N21 2QH.

MARGARET McDonagh of the Labour Party claims that "it is not the case" that Labour Party membership is falling (Letters, December 22). Your article stated that membership had fallen since the election, and that people may be leaving due to disillusionment over perceived broken election pledges. I am one of the people who has left Labour and joined the Green Party, so I read Ms McDonagh's letter very carefully.

The only facts she offered was that membership is higher than in 1994 and that it had increased throughout 1997. The first point is clearly irrelevant and the second point sounds convincing but may only mean that membership is higher now than it was at the start of the year. The obvious figure to quote was the change in membership since May 1. As Ms McDonagh chooses not to do so, I presume that your story was true.
Richard Mountford.
76 Springfield Road,
Kings Heath,
Birmingham B14 7DY.

A spate of religious disputes

THE Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales would do well to stay out of any campaign to exempt religious bodies from the European Convention on Human Rights (Church leaders press for human rights exemption, December 22).

There are already national and local Catholic agencies which include anti-discrimination clauses on grounds of sexual orientation within their equal opportunity policies. Surely, it is not envisaged that they should revoke accepted good employment practice?
Martin Pendergast.
57 Lyme Grove,
London E9 6PX.

ACCORDING to Emma Forrest (Soul sister, G2, December 18), I "have to understand that Kabbalah is not really Judaism". This isn't true. Judaism is a non-dogmatic religion that has harboured a multiplicity of theological views from ancient times to the present day. Kabbalah is the name of the mystical esoteric strand within it.

There are other groupings within Judaism that oppose Kabbalah. This is true of every Jewish grouping. The dry, anti-mystical strand within traditional Judaism which, for the sake of argument we can pretend is identical to "traditional Judaism" (it isn't, though the dry anti-mystical Jews would like it to be), does not ignore Kabbalah. It opposes it. Kabbalah is as much a part of traditional Judaism as any other.

Forrest also talks about Courtney Love marrying "a Hassidim". Hassidim is plural, like cherubim or seraphim. Since polyandry is outlawed under Jewish law, the chances of marrying a number of Hassidim are slim, even for Courtney Love.

Traditionally, Jews are warned not to begin learning Kabbalah until they are 40 years old and married with two children. The way to spot a Kabbalah charlatan is to see if they are prepared to teach Kabbalah to someone who does not fall into this category. If they are, then you know they have nothing to teach.
Wayne Myers.
11 Lambert Road,
London SW2 5BA.

The new Briton

ANTHONY Barnett (Slouching towards New Britain, December 20) was right to juxtapose the constitutional reform programme "elective dictatorship" and the psychology of the people but, I am afraid, too optimistic in saying that the British are now a different kind of people though there are some signs that we wish to be.

He under-estimates the psychological damage inflicted on people in the attempt to turn us into independent economic animals, encouraged to mistrust any form of community or collectivist endeavour. The psychological shift is one of insecurity and passivity in all spheres of life. This, combined with a deeply entrenched consumerism, has made us different people — but not yet of the sort Anthony Barnett wishes for.

And not the sort we wish to become. Resistance to a long-standing alienation finds expression in events like that in September. There is a crying out for something different. To this extent only is there a change — an awareness of possibilities.

There are small stirrings in the field of active citizenship but the vast majority of people are not engaged — especially in the workplace, where it is desperately required.

If all these contributions can begin to achieve in citizenship what Charter 88 has achieved in promoting institutional reform, then we shall truly have a new country. But people and leaders and institutions have to change together and leaders must recognise that they too have a duty to help build our capacity to be citizens, to participate and to be active.
Ray Sheath.
42 Dene Street,
Dorking RH4 2DW.

In search of a living Marxist

FRANK Furedi's defence of his role in Channel 4's Against Nature series (Letters, December 19) centred on his "libertarian humanism" and lack of involvement in party politics for many years. But is his defence quite what it seems? And is the danger in George Monbiot's attack on the programmes (Marxist found alive in C4, December 18) really red-baiting?

Furedi was a leading figure in what was in the 1980s the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). The last issue of its monthly review, Living Marxism, which I bought a year ago, carried an article by Furedi over two pages. The advert for books published by or sold through its publishing arm included two by Furedi. Perhaps the truth of Furedi's defence against Monbiot is in the RCP's retreat from Marxism? Furedi's article in the issue cited complained that the days are long gone when electoral politics could even be an arena for combat about "the big ideas — socialism versus capitalism, planning versus the free market". But he then spent two pages adding to the problem. Other articles included an attack on the churches as "an appendage to the victim support industry" and a defence of genetically engineered food.

Marxism does have something to say about the radical indifference of capitalism to the impact of expanding production on the environment. It has something to say about who pays and who profits. It also has important criticisms to make of the reactionary sentimentalism and utopianism of many Greens. However the Thatcher-influenced Living Marxism current has lost the plot entirely.
Paul Hubert.
26 Ashfield Avenue,
Shipley,
West Yorkshire BD18 3AL.

Porn the police should focus on

I AM A gay man who occasionally likes to watch hardcore pornography featuring consenting adults for the purpose of the ultimate in safe sex (Report, December 20).

Porn videos have been openly available in this country for years now through filegal sex shops, mail order, and courier services. Unfortunately, tapes sold through these sources are often used to fund the activities of drug barons and terrorist organisations.

The British Board of Film Classification's use of the R18 certificate to make such tapes available from legitimate tax-paying sex-shops should be applauded by Messrs Straw and Whittam-Smith. Thousands of hours of police time are wasted trying to stem the flow of tapes featuring consenting adults. Surely this time would be better spent tackling the insidious child porn industry and sex tourism, allowing those of us who wish to view erotic materialist in the privacy of our own homes to enjoy the same freedoms that are seen as being perfectly acceptable in most countries on mainland Europe.
Name and address supplied.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters: shorter ones are more likely to appear. We regret that we are unable to acknowledge letters

A Country Diary

CHESHIRE: Amongst the wild geese that arrive in the UK each autumn from their arctic breeding grounds in Iceland and Greenland, the pink-footed goose is the most abundant. One of its major wintering strongholds is on the Lancashire mosses and in most years a small proportion of this population eventually moves on, across the country to settle on feeding grounds around the Wash on the east coast. This is when we get our chance to see them as they fly over the valley and surrounding farmland — we are fortunate enough to be under part of their flight path from the west coast to the east coast. On three occasions during the past two weeks I have heard the exciting sound of an approaching flock and watched skeins of up to 125 birds pass by overhead. Their cries carry over quite long distances so more often than not you hear them before they come into full view. Then, as they get closer, you begin to hear the different individual voices with calls varying from a deep melodious honking to a much higher and sharper pitched "wink wink". These are the most musical of the grey geese. In and around the valley itself, the flocks of winter thrushes have been gradually building up in numbers, and now that the hawthorns have been stripped of berries, they have joined the starlings feeding in the fields. In the southern woods the chaffinches have been finding plenty of beech mast and, on one day last week, amongst a large party of these finches, I caught sight of two "tell tale" white rumps — a pair of brambling. It is unusual to see these visitors from Scandinavia in just ones or twos and in this case they may well have arrived amongst the chaffinch flock. Just as welcome were the white rumps of four male bullfinch perched over a bramble patch close by — a perfect Christmas setting.
J M THOMPSON

هكذا من الاصل

Diary

Emily Barr

FLICKING through a year-old copy of the Sunday Mirror, I chance upon a host of predictions from Russell Grant. Under Cancer, we read, spookily, of a shining light at the end of the tunnel and a summer of love. The predictions end halfway through the year. "1997 is the year for Princess Diana to reinvent herself in some way," concludes the be-jumpered one. "The Princess is full of surprises at the best of times." Meanwhile, Psychic News has received word of the Princess's continuing activities. Derbyshire medium Ruby Gould writes that Diana "had requested to become a healer in the spirit world so that she could continue her work". She has also passed on her personal thanks for Psychic News's sensitive coverage of her death. The Diary joins the Fortean Times in wishing the Princess well in her future career. Tomorrow we may look back at some other sages' predictions for 1997.

AT this time of peace and goodwill to all but the single parents and the disabled, it is surely time for the Diary and Downing Street to put aside our differences and join in sending a festive message to all readers. My colleague Simon Bowers called the Number 10 press office to make this festive suggestion, and after a slight hitch when all press officers were bafflingly found to be unavailable, was asked to put the request in writing and fax it. This he did. Silence. "Yes it has arrived," said a woman after a while, "and it is being considered at the moment." Strangely, this moment lasts for the rest of the day, but we hope to bring you news of a Christmas Eve thaw tomorrow.

FORMER MP Lady Olga Maitland's Christmas message, on the other hand, is both prompt and gracious. "I wish all Guardian readers a happy Christmas," she dictates. "They're living on temporary good times because I'll be back! Ha ha ha!" Former Doris Karloff turned darling of the left, however, is more succinct. "Beware Blair," mutters Ann Widdecombe darkly. We will.

CHRISTMAS is a time for thinking of those less fortunate and today they are chicken sexers. A battle is raging in Sydney, where poultry farm Steggles has hired five Korean workers to perform the delicate task of examining day-old chicks and sending boys off for fattening and girls for breeding. Steggles asserts the Koreans "are more accurate", while an outraged local retaliates that Australians are "faster and less error-prone". Can't you put differences aside and work together? There's no room for bickering in the cutthroat world of chicken sexing.

LABOUR MP DAVID Winnick sends us a letter he has received from a Ken Lamb of Chelmsford. One of the 47 rebels on single-parent benefits, Mr Winnick is grateful for the sober explanation of the Government's position from his correspondent. "You don't want to lose your free state handouts, anti-Blair c*** MP laying around doing nothing — thieving from the people," explains Ken. "That's why you support free hand-outs to those other useless scroungers, leeches, bloodsucking worms — one-parent family lazy shits. You commie bastard." We have sent the letter for forensic analysis, along with a sample of Alastair Campbell's hand, just to be sure.

FINALLY, anyone who fears they have overindulged in the festive fare and are suffering hallucinations should take note of a recent scene from Little Rock, Arkansas. Raymond Brown and his family were watching TV, as you do, when a car crashed through the wall. Janet Meadows had left her dogs in the car while she bought some milk, reports Dogs Today, when Buster and Cracker succeeded in knocking the handbrake and driving 70 yards downhill. "When the car came to a halt, there was a spaniel behind the wheel and a mongrel in the passenger seat," said a confused Mr Brown.

My Lords, Ladies and New Labour peers

Commentary

Hugo Young

FOR many famous Labour people, and some whom nobody has ever heard of, least of all in their Labour connection, this was the year when Christmas came early. They got their presents soon after May 1, and it changed their names if not their lives for ever. Watching the descent into the House of Lords of so many people officially committed to wiping out the place as it now exists has been a pleasure for all who know them.

Some, I noticed, performed the manoeuvre with uncontrollable excitement. One held a big party in a Pall Mall club, straight-faced, to celebrate the award of the long-awaited prize. I was present when another signed his grandly peerish name, Bloggs of Blagdon, for the first time. For reasons I needn't go into, this miraculous event took place in Chancellor Kohl's private residence, and the Chancellor very decently replied to Bloggs's effusive pride at being thus acknowledged as part of the Blairite business connection by saying that he would have the historic entry in his visitors' book specially illuminated.

Another class of exultation came from the minor politicos who'd done a few years in the Commons, following many years in local government, and who wondered whether the finger of fate, to make up the numbers of Labour ennoblement, would point at them or at some other nonentity indistinguishable from them. Here, too, descent into the peerage has been an apotheosis so delightful that the expected demand, that they one day vote for their own abolition, is but a blip on the far horizon.

But there was another category again, perhaps the most numerous, certainly the most celebrated. These were the members of the Labour intelligentsia, articulate enemies of pomp, scornful critics of privilege, professional scoffers at peerage of every kind, proponents of a New Britain, mostly but not invariably Blairite, in which there could be no place for anything like the ermine. They entered the Lords on clouds of regret. But they entered.

Their apologies came in different guises. Lord Puttnam of Film made a point of arranging his installation for November 5, the better to deploy himself as a flaming radical. Lord Rogers of Build reported "long family discussions about the merits and disadvantages" of preferment: moving debates, however, that turned out to have a quick answer. Lord Hattersley of Print began his own explanation with gratifying candour. He just couldn't bear to stay away from the Palace of Westminster, he said, and besides, he wanted to be alongside his old pals from Cabinet days.

But earnestness would out. "There are things I have to say about education and poverty," he explained, under the convenient self-delusion that these would have a larger audience in the Lords than do the forceful, elegant Hattersley writings that adorn the Guardian every week.

It is, of course, axiomatic that all these people want the House of Lords to be different. Liberal Democrats are the same. They have a stronger pedigree as reformers, but a larger roster of people whose access to Parliament could only be by the unelected route. All, Labour and Lib Dem, are more or less deriders of their own condition, and profess that their only purpose is to change it.

In this, however, they face difficulties that may stretch through the rest of their natural lives. The only change that's promised will serve to lay a still heavier burden of self-importance upon them. The Government is committed to abolishing the legislative duties of the hereditary peerage, which will leave the nominees of Mr Blair and his predecessors in lonely possession of powers and privileges in whose exercise, hitherto, they could consider themselves as meritoriously leavening the hereditary lump. Now, pending proper reform, they will be on their own.

Of this reform there is no sign. And history shows the immensity of the problems that will face anyone who attempts it. The range of options is as beguiling as the arguments against every one of them. Whether on new membership or new powers, the possible shape of a new second chamber arouses so many atavistic alarms, matched only by the silent passion any government feels for the convenience of the present poodle-chamber, that serious change could be indefinitely postponed.

I think it will be. There are so many more urgent things for a government to do, ministers will find themselves saying for years: we prove our credentials by getting rid of the hereditaries: but then, let us do nothing very much, since nobody can agree what it should be.

> Lord Puttnam of Film was installed on November 5, the better to deploy himself as a flaming radical

The fate of these new peers thus stretches uninvitingly before them. It will be truly a life sentence, unless they can summon up the energy that helps secure relief from the embarrassment they have heaped upon themselves. They need to be active in their own demolition, fiery in their self-abnegation, truly contemptuous of the status they have so reluctantly taken on, determined to confront the Government with the conditional nature of their own preferment.

How might they fashion the critical mass to achieve this? The chances of doing so may seem bleak. Perhaps part of an answer lies in the observable inclination of most modern peers to try and have their status both ways. They accept the peerage, yet are desperate, in all circumstances save the making of speeches and the commanding of restaurant tables, to be commoners.

Call me Richard, call me Roy, call me Tessa is their desperate appeal. Even Tories say call me Douglas. Having assumed the appellation of second-chamber legislators, they do everything they can to deny it. In the society in which these pitiful characters mostly move, their conflicted postures seem to be almost unbearable.

The answer, perhaps, is to make them more so. I do not insist on Baroness. But Lord or Lady seems the least that they should accept, as a stimulus to doing what they can to fulfil the terms on which they took the ermined shilling. Lords and Ladies are what they have become, the punishment they take for the privilege they agree briefly to enjoy. Lord and Lady is what they should always be, at every lectern from Oxbridge to the London School of Economics, on every platform from the Labour Party Conference to the columns of the Guardian. They should wander the earth under this discomfort, until it becomes so intolerable that they force the Government to do something about it. Otherwise they will live for ever, and so will we, under the pretence that the Lords can find a new, benign existence up its own orifice. The people's peerage.

Am I going La-La or is that a feles domesticus?

Mark Steel

IT WAS like the 1992 election all over again. Just as it looked as if the Tories were on the way out, they triumphed at the last minute, this time to score another Christmas number one. Even worse, the Spice Girls were up against the Teletubbies, who are far more coherent opponents than Neil Kinnock.

Contrary to what's been argued by some feminists there is nothing progressive about the Spice Girls. Bea Campbell wrote that sacking their manager was a defeat for "professional patriarchy", and a victory for strong women, who had the "same relationship with their manager as between all proletarians and capitalists". The Suffragettes obviously used the wrong tactics. Instead of chaining themselves to railings, they should have advertised salt and vinegar crisps. There's no way Asquith would have wriggled out of *that*.

The Teletubbies on the other hand are accused by many liberals of lowering standards, when they are raising them immeasurably. This was made clear to me by my 16-month-old son who, like most boys of that age, has a genius for danger and destruction, so that you can put him in a room with no apparent hazards and still end up yelling "Oh no he's emptied the jar of pickled onions into the video". "Don't try chewing the light bulb", "Where did you get that machete?", and "Oh my God, he's found a live rattlesnake", in the course of a single minute.

At that age toddlers can't generally concentrate on anything for more than a few seconds, but with one call from Dipsy he bounds to the television and sits transfixed until it's time to say goodbye in Teletubbyland. Despite these magical qualities, the programme has been attacked for teaching improper English, as when Po can't find his scooter and repeats "Where Po 'cooter?" over and over again.

But language is relative. Clearly if the Guardian leader began "Irley Porter fiddle 'lection in Westminner. Eh oh. She caught now. Aaah poor Irley", and then repeated the words to Ride a Cock-Horse to Banbury Cross four times, it would seem a little odd. But when you're 16-months-old, "Where Po 'cooter?" is a tremendous advance. When these critics' children first point at a cat and say "Ka" do they yell "There's no such thing as a Ka. From now on you refer to the delineated beast by its Latin title of feles domesticus."

So a programme for babies has been discussed as if it were a Russian novel. Somewhere at the BBC there must be a pile of angry letters from middle-class parents expressing outrage that the breakdown in La-La's relationship with Po in the aftermath of the lost scooter incident is never fully explored.

Perhaps they add: "I'm not against children enjoying light televisual relief. Indeed I am currently showing my 18-month-old daughter a season of Jacques Tati classics."

If it's true that the Teletubbies represents a "dumbing down" of kids' TV, there is also the tricky question of Bill and Ben. This involved two men who lived in flowerpots and would have called a scooter a blobalob as this was the only word they knew.

The fashionable method for remembering old children's programmes is to claim a hidden sub-text, that The Magic Roundabout was a metaphor for drug culture, or that Tales from the Riverbank was full of references to Che Guevera. But they were just silly programmes that harmlessly entertained us.

TELETUBBIES, with a combination of bright colours, characters with baby features and repetition, all shot from an angle which mimics a toddler's perspective, captivates the youngest-ever audience for a TV show and succeeds in teaching them to say "eh oh", or to count to three, making it educational.

Because human beings are not ignorant sponges, incapable of testing ideas from the media with their own experience, there won't be a future generation that insists a scooter is a cooter. Just as in my generation there's no one, as far as I know, who at the age of 35 refuses to go to bed until they're told to by a giant weed.

The real trauma lies in the knowledge that one of the men making a fortune from Tubby-mania is Jeffrey Archer, who helped finance the project. This is all despite the fact that Teletubbyland is clearly a classless utopia in which all citizens have equal access to the means of production (a machine which makes Tubbytoast and another which specialises in Tubbycustard), leaving the Tubbies free to indulge in cultural activities such as jumping in puddles.

So the chances are that next year the Tubby collective will expropriate their speculator, earning praise from journalists for their stand against professional patriarchy, and sweeping to a Christmas number one and masses of interviews at which they'll all jump up and down excitedly saying "Aah poor Jeffy. He gone now. 'Cos Jeffy big 'anker."

Tony Blair may have needed the Tory tabloids to win the general election, but why, **Ian Aitken** wonders, is he using the Daily Mail to argue for his benefit plans now?

Fawning on the enemy

PICTURE the scene in the Blair bunker last Saturday evening. The great man himself is relaxing after delivering a succession of stern speeches in defence of his welfare reforms, first to Labour MPs at Westminster and later to grassroots party members.

He is quietly congratulating himself when the door bursts open. In rushes Alistair Campbell, the man in charge of the newspapers, waving a copy of the first edition of the Sunday Telegraph. It is leading on a leaked letter from David Blunkett, in which the Education Secretary warns that cutting benefits for the disabled would make a mockery of Labour's election pledges.

There is rage and consternation and a council of war is hastily convened. But while it deliberates on what to do next, more bad news arrives. The other Sunday papers have picked up the Telegraph story and are splashing on a full-scale Cabinet split.

The search for a counterstroke intensifies, but no one can think of anything which will knock 'em in the aisles. Then, at last, Dr Campbell has an idea. "I know," he tells Blair, "I'll write an article under your name, saying this is one of those tough decisions you are always banging on about, and that you are standing by it. Then I'll get the Daily Mail to publish it on Monday morning."

Everyone recognises this to be a masterstroke. Accordingly, Campbell is sent off to twist Lord Rothermere's arm, after reminding him that he has pledged himself, if not his newspaper, to New Labour. All returns with the news that it's in the bag.

I admit that this is pure fancy, although something of the sort must have happened in Downing Street over the weekend. But what puzzles me is how they came to pick the Daily Mail as the appropriate vehicle for Alastair Campbell's wheeze.

True, Campbell is a tabloid man at heart. But even so, the front page of Oswald Mosley's old mouthpiece — the Forgers' Gazette, as Michael Foot calls it — hardly seems the right place to trumpet a Labour prime minister's defiance of his own ministers and party members.

Needless to say, the Mail didn't go limp on the story once they'd got it. They ran a giant piece headlined BLAIR: I WON'T FLINCH IN WELFARE BATTLE, and subheaded Blair Writes For The Mail.

The news report began: "The premier warns his divided Cabinet today that he will bring in more welfare reforms come what may."

Blair's actual piece fully confirmed this interpretation.

So why on earth did Campbell choose to deliver Blair's message to his anxious and bewildered troops in a paper which generates even more loathing among Labour supporters than Rupert Murdoch's Sun?

One could perhaps argue that Old Labour preached to the converted far too often and that the party needs to address Daily Mail readers if they are to go on winning elections — a valid point in other circumstances. But just now the people whose support (or acquiescence) Blair currently needs for his welfare "reforms" aren't Mail readers steeped in Thatcherite greed; they supported tax reductions based on welfare cuts long before New Labour saw the virtues of the scheme.

On the contrary, the people Blair needs to address right now, and as a matter of urgency, aren't Mail readers but his own followers. Many of them are becoming desperate for some kind of reassurance about the events of the past few weeks and a few disillusioned souls are even quitting the Labour Party altogether.

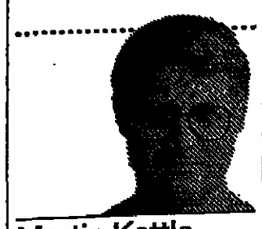
Unless something is said to them, and soon, there is a real danger that a mood of black despair will grip the party, with potentially more serious long-term consequences than a mere stand-up row.

But such people would not be seen dead reading the Daily Mail. In general, they read the Daily Mirror, the Independent and — dare I say it — the Guardian.

Alas, at least two of these organs have expressed scepticism about some aspects of New Labour's policy. In return, Blair has accused the Guardian of attacking his government "for commercial reasons" — a euphemistic way of saying that it chooses its opinions for their saleability.

Though I am no longer on the staff of this paper, I find that sort of talk unpleasant. But fawning on the Daily Mail is much, much worse.

President Gephardt may be waiting



Martin Kettle

HILLARY Clinton, a recent New Yorker article claims, thinks that Tony Blair and Bill Clinton definitely add up to a trend. New Democrat and New Labour, she is said to believe, represent "a historic transatlantic development — a 'third way' between traditional liberalism and conservatism, which her husband would receive credit for initiating".

But the idea that Clinton has found the key to modern politics would strike many serious American observers as simply risible. To seek evidence of this failing, one need look no further than the continuing rise of Dick Gephardt. If Clintonism was achieving what its advocates claim for it, then the Democratic Party's uncharismatic leader in the House of Representatives would count for little and Vice-president Al Gore would, as heir apparent, be the only member of the party's next generation worth listening to.

But Gephardt is not merely the leader of the opposition in the Republican-dominated Congress. He is also the leader of the opposition within his own party. And as last month's vote on Clinton's trade legislation showed — when Gephardt led about 160 of the 205 House Democrats in a revolt which scuppered the centrepiece of the president's legislative programme — in practice he currently speaks for more Democrats than Clinton does.

Since registered party supporters rather than voters as a whole choose presidential candidates, Gephardt is clearly in a position to give Gore a strong run — for all that money that he and Clinton spend much of their time raising — when the battle for the Democratic nomination begins in earnest in two years time. But there is more to it than that.

Gephardt has now begun, for the first time, to articulate a political programme rather than simply to manoeuvre his own candidacy.

In a speech at Harvard University, he not only made a series of strong attacks on Clinton's political methods — "a political strategy masquerading as policy" — but also called for a "new progressivism", invoking the turn-of-the-century era when President Theodore Roosevelt started the twin processes of putting reins on America's capitalist corporations and establishing worker protections that Franklin Roosevelt carried forward in the New Deal.

Gephardt's speech never referred either to Clinton or to Gore by name. But nor did he made any serious attempt to conceal his target. He contrasted himself with "Some who now call themselves New Democrats, but who set their compass only off the direction of others, who talk about the political centre, but fail to understand that if it is only defined by others, it lacks core values". Instead, Gephardt offered "a movement for change and not a money machine".

EXACTLY where the philosophy of this so-called "new progressivism" departs from Clintonism is sometimes hard to pinpoint. Indeed Gephardt's appeal to the Theodore Roosevelt era carries echoes of Blair's frequent attempts to reconnect New Labour with Edwardian New Liberalism.

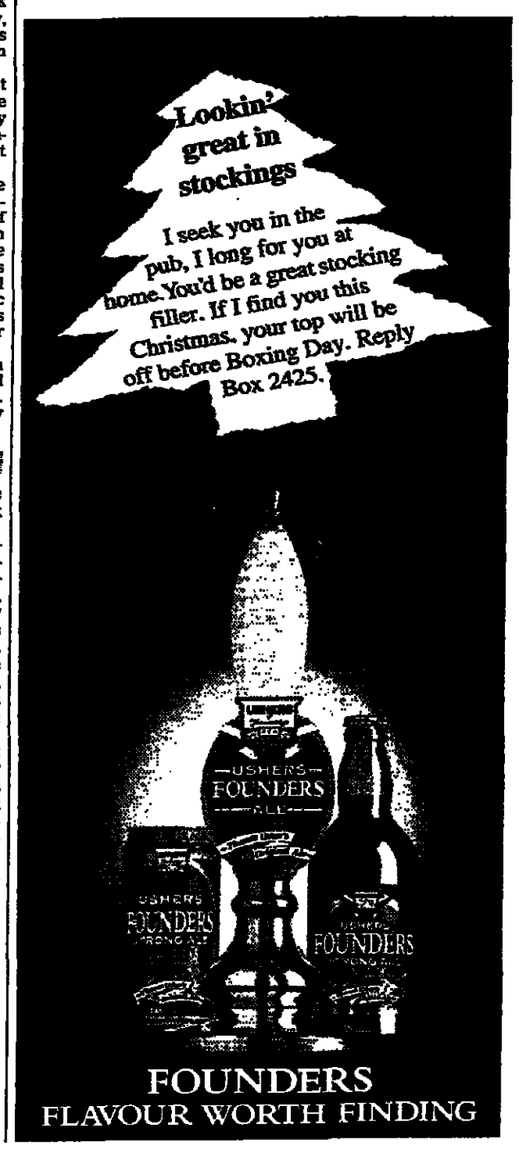
But Gephardt's intended appeal is very clear indeed. His audience is the substantial mass of Americans who feel that they have been left behind by the soaring corporate profits and surging stock market prices of the 1990s.

Clinton's beautifully crafted but often vapid aspirational rhetoric rarely connects with these insecurities, stresses and indignations. By contrast, Gephardt's promises of better wages and benefits, including the new health care system which Clinton failed to deliver, directly address the practical failings of the Clinton presidency.

None of this should suggest that Gephardt has somehow come up with the answers which have eluded almost every left-wing or liberal politician of the 1990s. Nor that he will necessarily become either nominee or president in 2000.

However, he is the most important witness so far to something which New Democrats and New Labour deny at their peril — namely the fragility and even failure of large parts of Clintonism.

Gephardt stands for the only too plausible proposition that Clinton has not found a "third way". It is a recognition from which Blairites should not flinch — to say nothing of Al Gore.



Lord Kings Norton

Letting aviation take wing

POWERFUL, energetic, always genial, often controversial, Harold Roxbee Cox, who has died aged 95, had great influence on British aviation after the first world war and in many ways led its post-second world war control and administration.

He rose, from apprenticeship as a 16-year-old within the embryonic aircraft arm of the Austin motor company, to head aerodynamics at the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) during the second world war. He later became a president of the Royal Aeronautical Society, steered the development of the Air Registration Board, and served as Chancellor of the new Cranfield University when it evolved from the former Cranfield Institute of Technology.

Roxbee, as he was known to his friends and associates even after being ennobled as Lord Kings Norton, had a huge grasp and enormous enthusiasm for every aspect of aviation, which he retained to the end. His innate sense of balance and fairness led him, in later life, to describe the handing over of details of Frank Whittle's jet engine developments to the Americans in 1941 as a "betrayal" — although Whittle himself acknowledged that it was a betrayal driven by technological expediency.

Roxbee Cox's great unrequited love was for rigid airships and he was involved in their design in the 1920s.

He was seven when Louis Blériot made his cross-channel flight. Among schoolboys as well as engineers there was a realisation that a new arena of adventure was opening up. Although his academic potential was recognised when he was at Birmingham's Kings Norton Grammar School, Roxbee persuaded his father to let him take up the Austin apprenticeship.

He was involved in the development of the Austin Whippet biplane which flew in 1919. Only six were built but he remembered warmly its tubed fuselage, folding wings and other design novelties.

The Depression following the first world war put Austin's aircraft arm out of business and Roxbee back in the motor works as a general apprentice. He was allowed to take an external degree at London University, gaining a first, and took his doctorate on the aerodynamics and instabilities of wings at Imperial College London.

He then joined the team working at the Royal Airship Works at Cardington, Bedfordshire, where the huge R101 was being designed from 1924 to 1929 — and was chief technical officer in 1931. He recalled that when he first arrived, "I was taken to the 'lofting room' where men were bending strips of wood. I was told that this was how they designed the shape." Roxbee Cox, confirming his early reputation for directness, told them they were wasting their time and that the ideal shape could be much better determined by equations.

He led a design team of four engineers who carried out all the required calculations. The R101, unveiled in 1929, was the culmination of a decade of British airship development and because of the need to include a new centre section to increase the volume of hydrogen, had an overall length of 722 feet. It was a truly awesome giant of the skies.

Sadly, it harboured weaknesses, not of the aerodynamics with which Roxbee Cox was involved, but of hydrogen leakage enhanced in flight by gas-bag chafing on internal struts. There were more than 100 hours of test flights and when it took off on its proving flight in 1930, Roxbee Cox expected to be on board. In the event VIPs took the places of the engineers. Roxbee had been posted to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough when he learned of the R101 crash at Boves in France. Soon after, the Government withdrew all support for the project.

> He described the handing over of details of Frank Whittle's jet engine to the Americans in 1941 as 'betrayal'

Roxbee returned to work on seroplanes at the RAE, becoming scientific officer in the aerodynamics department from 1935 to 1936 and heading the new air defence department from 1936 to 1938.

In this role, he coordinated technical developments of a new generation of fighter and bomber aircraft. It was the time of the transition from biplane fighters such as the Gladiator to the Hurricane and from bombers such as the Hart to the Blenheim.

After 15 months as the Air Registration Board's chief technical officer he returned to the RAE with the outbreak of war in 1939 and then gravitated to the Ministry of Aircraft Production, becoming director of special projects from 1943 to 1944. It was during the war that he was closely involved with, and sought to encourage, the development of Frank Whittle's jet engine. Whittle's patent was published in 1930, and there had been little secrecy in Britain. So, although Whittle tested his first engine in 1937, it was the German Heinkel He178 which made the first jet flight in August 1939.

Roxbee Cox sought rapid jet development in Britain. The first British jet, the Gloster E28/29, flew in 1941 but, he recalled, "most of the top men here thought it could never work, but the Americans recognised its value very quickly."

This, perhaps, ignited his lifelong concern that British governments seem especially ill-equipped to provide a sympathetic environment for technological advance. Apart from the scientific branch of the Civil Service, which is "always on tap but never on top there are very few scientists and no engineers in government. Certainly our governments never seem to know how to handle new technology and nurture innovation in our most important national industries," he argued.

The jet engine problem came to a head in 1944 when the Minister of Aircraft Production, Sir Stafford Cripps, appointed Roxbee Cox as director of the new government-owned Power Jets (R&D) Ltd, which took over Whittle's company and handed British development and production to industry. Whittle, left solely with research, was furious. Secrecy still prevailed and, in 1946, Power Jets metamorphosed as the Government Gas Turbine Establishment at Pyestock, under Roxbee's direction and in formal liaison with the emerging jet engine industry. The ideas and the projects emerged, often with large potential, but were stunted or destroyed by the fickle nature of government support.

Earlier, in 1944, Roxbee Cox had taken a powerful hand in the creation of the Cranfield College of Technology, an aviation and engineering-based higher education establishment of a type new to Britain. After a disappointing stint as chief scientist at the Ministry of Fuel and Power, where he pointed out that only one of the 52 permanent secretaries in government departments had scientific qualifications, he retired from the civil service to join the governing body of Cranfield. As vice-chairman and eventually Chancellor, he steered the evolution of the college to its present status as a highly specialised university.

Roxbee Cox . . . a reputation for directness

During this time he played a major role in developing the Air Registration Board and was chairman of the National Council for Technological Awards. He also chose to work within industry.

Knighted in 1953, he was created a life peer as Baron Kings Norton in 1965 and subsequently entertained the Lords with his often mordant views of the peculiarities of life and of government.

He married twice. His first wife Margery, whom he married in 1927 and by whom he had two sons, died in 1980. In 1982 he married Joan Pascoe who survives him.

Anthony Tucker

Lord Kings Norton (Harold Roxbee Cox), aeronautical engineer, born June 6, 1902; died December 21, 1997

Bruce Woodcock

Champ who proved a knockout with the fans

THE DEATH of Bruce Woodcock at the age of 76 brings to an end an era in which boxing was one of the major sports. He was the heavyweight champion in the years immediately after the war, a time when boxing matched football in terms of attendance and newspaper coverage.

The combination of promoter Jack Solomons, and the Harringay Arena, together with boxers Freddie Mills and Woodcock, to be followed in the 1940s by Randolph Turpin, was the golden age of British boxing. Not since the Welsh wizards, Wilde, Welsh and Driscoll, who fought before and during the first world war, had boxing so captured the public's imagination. And all through radio and newsreels, for there was no television.

During the second world war Woodcock worked at the London and North Eastern Railway works at Doncaster, a reserved occupation. He became the Amateur Boxing Association's light-heavyweight champion in 1942, and after a meteoric rise in the professional ranks, knocked out Jack London to win the British heavyweight title.

Like most white British heavyweights — Joe Bugner is the only exception — he was a relatively small man, weighing not more than 13½ stone and standing six feet high. Today, he would be a cruiser-weight, and, like Henry Cooper, who was of similar build, would undoubtably have become a "world" champion at that weight.

Undefeated, he was matched with Tami Mauriello in New York in 1946 and was knocked out in the fifth round. His left jab had kept him ahead on points. Mauriello was the leading contender for the title, held at that time by Joe Louis. Woodcock invariably boxed in the English style, a good straight left and a heavy punch in his right hand. But he cut easily, and despite his courage, was generally at a disadvantage against American heavyweights who were, even then, two sizes larger.

In a career lasting from 1942 to 1950, Woodcock had 39 contests of which he lost only four. He took part in seven championship contests, losing two. (The second Savold fight was not for the universally regarded heavyweight title.) Of his 35 wins, only two were on points, proof of the power of his right hand.

Woodcock defeated two reigning light-heavyweight champions, Gus Lesnevitch, (knockout in the eighth round) and his compatriot, Freddie Mills (14th round). He won, on a disqualification, against the American Lee Savold, but lost the return which was for a "world" title, unrecognised in the United States. (It is interesting to note that Joe Louis made short work of both Savold and Mauriello.)

> He cut easily, and despite his courage, was generally at a disadvantage against American heavyweights who were two sizes larger

Having won the European and Empire Heavyweight titles, Woodcock was the victim of another mismatch, this time against the huge Polish-American coalminer, Joe Baksi. Baksi broke Woodcock's jaw in the first round with a left hook, but the British champion battled bravely on until the fight was eventually stopped on cuts.

Woodcock was at his most formidable against men of his own size. He knocked out Lesnevitch, and twice easily beat the brawler, Freddie Mills. He also knocked out an American contender called Lee Oma.

Whether he would have beaten Henry Cooper is, I think, likely; he would have punched too hard for Our 'Enery, who was also susceptible to facial cuts. But Woodcock lacked Cooper's easygoing character and flair for self-advertisement. He was a dour Yorkshireman who made only a relatively small sum of money, there being no television fees at the time.

After he lost his British title on cuts to Jack Gardner in 1950, Woodcock, who felt he had been badly managed throughout his career by Norman Hurst, became embittered. He cut his links with boxing and became a publican near Doncaster. He never appeared at many of the old fighters' reunions, or attempted a film of his life.

He last appeared in the newspapers when as a man of 70-odd he pursued and caught some youths who were trespassing on his land.

What is remarkable that in a career of 39 fights, he never met a black heavyweight. Regardless of colour, he could not have coped with Joe Louis's strength, while Ezzard Charles would have been too slick for him. Nevertheless Woodcock buried the legend of the horizontal British heavyweight and was a credit to the game. If only he had been taken by Hurst to America in 1946, where, instead of being grossly overmatched, he could have learnt his trade in the gym, and been brought along more slowly against easier opponents. Just one of the many "ifs" in boxing.

He was British in style to the extent that he was a single puncher; never mastering the American arts of infighting and combination punching.

Nor, unlike Henry Copper, was he a master of public relations. He was not the sort to advertise deodorants.

Julian Critchley

Bruce Woodcock, boxer, born January 18, 1921; died December 21, 1997

Bruce Woodcock . . . meteoric rise through the professional ranks

Birthdays

Emperor Akihito of Japan, 64; **Lord Blake**, historian, 81; **Robert Bly**, American men's writer, 71; **Helen Brinton**, Labour MP, 43; **Sir Peter Davis**, the man from the Pru, 56; **Maurice Denham**, actor, 87; **John Guinness**, chairman, British Nuclear Fuels, 62; **Yousuf Karsh**, portrait photographer, 89; **Graham Kelly**, chief executive, Football Association, 52; **Prof Peter Lachmann**, president, Royal College of Pathologists, 68; **Belinda Lang**, actress, 44; **Christopher Lawrence**, silversmith, 61; **Judy Leden**, hang-glider, 38; **Wafic Said**, financier, 59; **Helmut Schmidt**, former Chancellor, West Germany, 79; **Queen Silvia of Sweden**, 54.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

A PANEL, headed Beef facts, which accompanied a report on Page 8 yesterday, was sexually confused. It referred to beef cows, instead of beef cattle. It described heifers as male calves, instead of female cattle which have not calved. It described steers as female calves, instead of castrated males, or bullocks.

AN ERROR in transmission led to the alteration of a sentence in an article headed, My Welfare Days, by Clare Sambrook, (Page 17, December 19). It resulted in the omission of the death of one of her siblings. The number of surviving siblings was then increased inaccurately from four to five.

EDDIE CHAPMAN, (obituary, Page 17, December 18), was born and worked in Sunderland, which is on Wearside and not, as stated, Tyneside.

OUR OBITUARY of David Rousset, (Page 14, December 17), said, "He had to cancel the fact that he was a Trotskyist." It should have read, "He had to conceal the fact . . ."

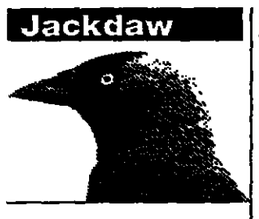
AN ARTICLE on Pages 12, 13, of G2, December 22, referred to "John Walcot who, writing under the name Peter Simple" etc. It should have been Wolcot, and the pseudonym was Peter Pindar.

A PHOTOGRAPH which accompanied a report headed, Council 'mired in sleaze' (Page 4, December 20), showed Rotherham and not Doncaster as captioned.

JULIAN Critchley's column, Marriage won't make a man of Hague (Page 17, December 19), mistakenly described Minette Marrin, the Telegraph columnist, as Minette Martin.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor, Ian Mayes, by telephoning 0171 239 9589 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Fax: 0171 239 9897. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

Jackdaw



Heaven sent

HEAVEN has got itself a bad name, and no one seems interested in it any more. How odd, when our most frequent prayer is to Our Father in heaven. Yet Christians, having first become dubious about the existence of hell, have now become reticent about expressing belief in the afterlife at all. When I say that my husband is alive in heaven I get very strange looks, not just from unbelievers but from Christians too, even from Catholics. Too shy to find themselves trapped into either expressing or denying faith in eternal life, after an embarrassed pause, they move on to another subject. Why has heaven become such an embarrassment? It is partly because of the evil done by pie-in-the-sky theologies that tell us that what happens on earth does not matter because heaven will make up for it. What happens on earth matters terribly, and everything Jesus did in his tireless work of healing and preaching justice pointed to how much it mattered. Another reason why heaven is out of fashion is that people today are not much into harps and clouds. And that is strange because the harp is possibly the most sublime of all instruments, and clouds are possibly the most ravishing of all God's wonders. Listen to Ravel's Introduction and Allegro and try to resist the rippling sensuality of the harp notes. Go up in an aeroplane, and try to keep your eyes off the view from the windows. But in any case, as everyone knows, however wonderful harps and clouds are, they are nothing more than a feeble gesture at the ineffable.

Heaven is what we are made for, it is the end of our ultimate longing, it is our real, final home. It is that place (an experience that we speak of through a metaphor of a place) where we find our ultimate and deepest rest.
Made for heaven, the Tablet.

Night angels

THERE can be no greater romance than that which bonds the slipper-wearer and his preferred home delivery food providers. Better and far deeper than John and Yoko, the relationship between yourself and the 50cc angels of the night requires tact, compassion and a minimum charge of £8. It seems so simple on the face of it. You call The Man and you are fed. The fact that this requires the exchange of money seems somehow inadquate compared to the sheer joy that comes encased in an occasionally, and charmingly, leaky cardboard container. Think how much guilt, persuasion, pretence of illness, affection and threat you would need to muster to get even your best friend to make you a delicious meal and bring it to your door. Yet these latterday saints of the United Church of Jalfrezi and Napoli, who barely know you, will bring food to you for a minimal emotional investment.
Pizza to the door, The Idler.

Prima madonna

STIRRUPED legs straddle Western cultures, bestriding her celebrity in the nuclear family. She is the forever Madonna from whose suckle spurts the modern intellectuals — psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists. She teaches them their first words which they use, in turn to judge her. Virgin, prostitute, angel, witch, Creator, castrator. She is the Cult of Mother, eternally feminine, all-forgiving receptacle of blame. Hearts bound in guilt-edged ribbon, a lacy noose from which gurgles professions of greeting-card love. Softly let me count the ways, Mother.
From Fallopia, fiction in Diva.

Lady Madonna . . . Diva

Think big

EVERY year's the same. You bask in the afterglow of Christmas with the taste of turkey lingering in your mouth, January rears its imposing head, bringing with it cold, dark nights, a wedge of bills and a return to the same drab faces at work. And then there's the clutch of ludicrous New Year's resolutions.

So what have you promised to give up this time round? All-night drinking binges? Full-fat cream? Or are you one of the four million Brits who will try to give up smoking for 1998? (Ninety per cent fail, by the way.) Perhaps you've already paid for a year's membership at the local gym, where you can expose your body to ridicule in front of people who had the sense to begin their fitness training in the privacy of their own homes.

New Year resolutions nearly always fail. Whatever you decide to do, chances are your new regime won't last long. Research proves that, on average, resolutions must be made five years in a row before any real degree of success is achieved. More depressingly, one British study found that 77 per cent of resolutions are kept for just seven days, while only 55 per cent are maintained for a month.

Perhaps all that initial effort and humiliation is not worth the gain and, instead of making yourself miserable by giving up smoking for a couple of weeks, or boring yourself stupid by finally painting the back walls of your cupboards, why not be bold, be adventurous, think big — instead of your normal resolutions why not really change your life in 1998?

Perhaps you're a taxi driver who wants to be a Hollywood scriptwriter, a drama teacher who wants to study quantum physics, or a merchant banker who wants to teach engineering to students in China. Why limit your dreams? Gordon Sumner became one of the highest paid ex-English teachers ever when he emerged from his chrysalis to become Sting, the international rock star. And William Bradley Pitt became one of the most famous ex-chauffeurs in the world when he re-invented himself as Brad Pitt. The message is clear: you can do or be anything, if you make it happen.
A pep talk from Focus.

Jackdaw wants jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian.co.uk., fax 0171-713 4366; write Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Hannah Pool

Death Notices

BROADEST. Unexpectedly at his home in Ringwood on December 16th Tony, aged 67 years. Dearly loved father of Guy and Nick and grandfather of James, Jonathan and Joe. Funeral Service at Ringwood Parish Church on Tuesday December 30th at 2.00 p.m. followed by a private cremation. No flowers, enquiries to Barrow Bros., Funeral Directors, 2 Nursery Road, Ringwood, Hants.

To place your announcement telephone 0171 713 4567 or fax 0171 713 4129 between 9am and 3pm Mon-Fri.

هكذا من الأصل

Eurofighter's £32bn jobs boost, page 12

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
Fax: 0171-833-4456

FinanceGuardian

Prudential going to the shops

P&O, the shipping and property company, has agreed to sell the Arndale Centre, the shopping complex in central Manchester hit by an IRA bomb last year, to the insurance group Prudential for £325 million.

The price is a substantial premium to the £215 million book value of the 15-acre site, one of Britain's busiest shopping centres.

The Arndale is now well on the way to restoration after the explosion which injured some 100 people. P&O said the repair programme would be complete in March 1998.

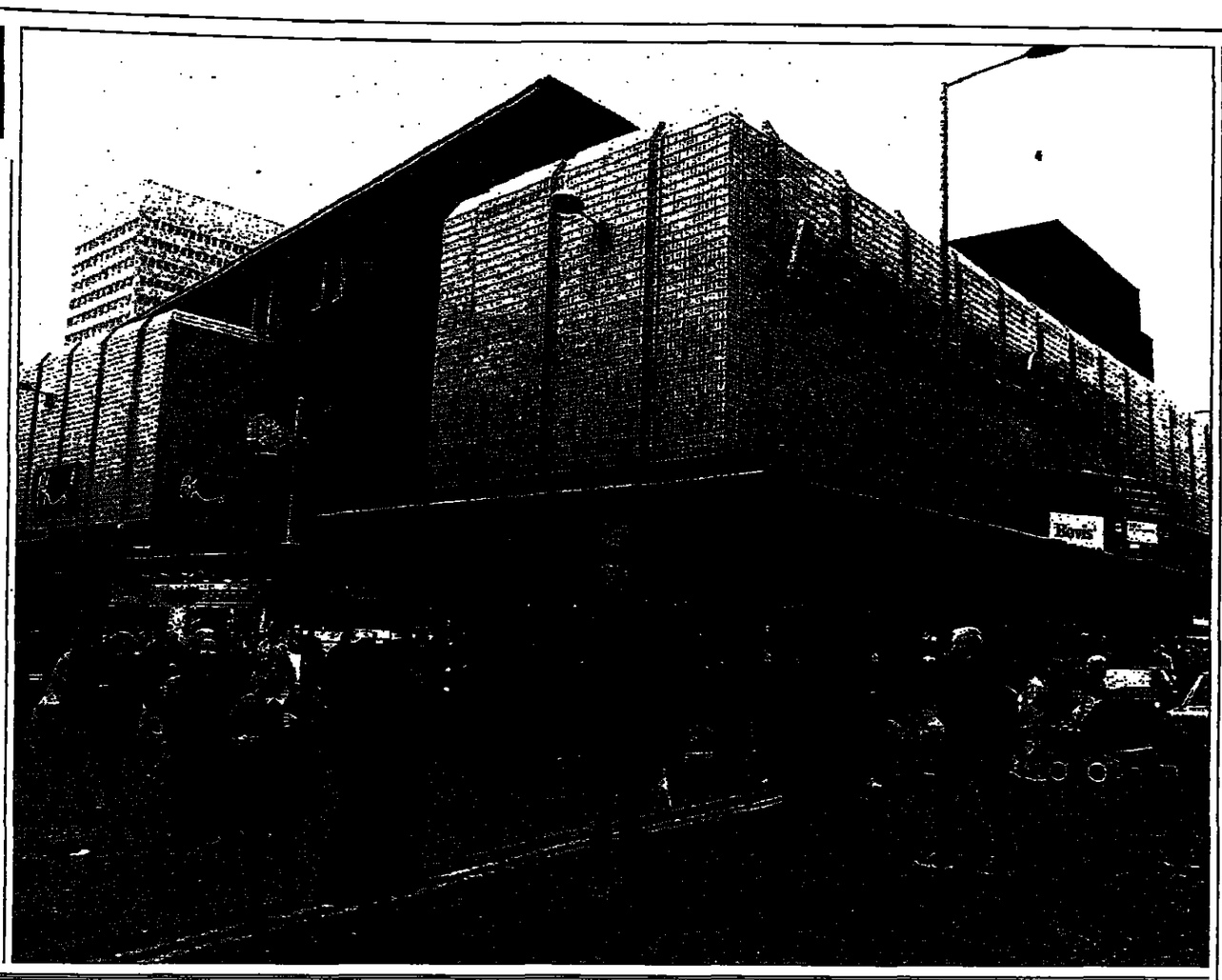
For P&O, the sale caps a plan to raise a net £500 million in property sales by the end of next year to reinvest in its main businesses of cruise liners, container shipping and ferries.

"With this sale in place we will have comfortably achieved our target well ahead of time," P&O chairman Lord Sterling said.

The Pru will pay £315 million in cash and make up the balance by transferring interests in London properties where P&O is the tenant.

The Pru will pay £265 million on completion of the transaction early next year and the remaining £50 million in December 2000.

PHOTOGRAPH: RICH MARSHAM



£4bn bill for nuclear merger

Deal may lead to heavy job losses

Simon Beavis

THE Government yesterday cleared the way for the merger of the last state-owned nuclear companies, British Nuclear Fuels and Magnox Electric, but disclosed that the deal could cost the taxpapayer up to £4 billion.

The merger — announced in a written reply released on the last day of Parliament before the Christmas recesss — will take place over the next year and will create a group which will initially employ 18,000, with a combined turnover of around £1.8 billion.

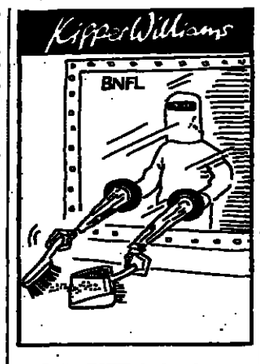
It will be responsible for nuclear fuel recycling, waste management and, with the addition of Magnox Electric's ageing fleet of reactors, will produce 7 per cent of the electricity in England and Wales.

But Energy Minister John Battle has had to accept that the deal, originally conceived by the previous Government to help pave the way for the privatisation of British Energy, will also have huge a cost, despite efforts to contain a bill which would have been far bigger under the Conservatives' planning.

The Tories had guaranteed to pick up any part of Magnox's decommissioning bill it was unable to meet itself, up to a total of £3.7 billion. Ministers had also agreed to raise that guarantee by 4.5 per cent a year to reflect price increases. By next March the bill would have reached £4.8 billion.

Mr Battle has now guaranteed to provide the original £3.7 billion, and to continue raising the figure at 4.5 per cent annually. But, in return, BNFL has agreed to absorb £500 million of Magnox liabilities that are not currently covered by its assets.

Mr Battle claimed yesterday he had cut the liabilities legacy inherited by the Exchequer by £1.1 billion. In addition, he has agreed that any savings up to £1.6 billion



made by BNFL in its clean-up bill will be shared between the company and the Government.

In a further modification to earlier undertakings, it has been agreed that the Exchequer will begin to pay out only from 2006/7.

Under the merger, Magnox Electric will become a subsidiary of BNFL's magnox generation division, bringing power stations together with the business that supplies and reprocesses its fuel.

Mr Battle said: "The merger will create an enlarged, integrated and strong BNFL able, for the first time, to manage all aspects of the magnox business as a whole."

Both companies had independently set themselves a target of cutting costs by between 20 and 25 per cent, so the jobs fallout could be severe. BNFL chief executive John Taylor admitted that the merger would result in job losses. But, he insisted, all sides would benefit from the eventual agreement. "We really see this as a three-way win," he said.

Mark Baker, the chairman of Magnox Electric, is set to retire as soon as the Government's shareholding in the company is transferred to BNFL.

The share transfer is expected to be completed in January.

But BNFL will then have to win approval for the tie-up from a string of regulators, including the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, the Environment Agency and the electricity watchdog, Offer. Among other hurdles to be crossed, each reactor will have to be relicensed by the NII to ensure that it can be operated safely.

Mr Taylor said that he was keen to run the stations as long as they were safe and economically viable. This would involve raising their lifetimes from the current 37 years to more than 40.

Notebook

Flying solo is no longer an option

Edited by Mark Milner

IT HAS been an interminable time coming but, at last, the defence ministers of Britain, Germany, Italy and Spain have put their signatures to the production contracts for the Eurofighter.

Inevitably the signing ceremony was accompanied with a good deal of celebratory hyperbole, but then £40 billion defence deals are scarcely an every day occurence.

Britain's defence secretary, George Robertson, was keen to argue yesterday that the project will deliver on two fronts. The Eurofighter was important not only for Britain's defence but for Europe's defence industry, he said.

The point is an important one. Directly or indirectly the Eurofighter project will, at its peak, provide work for up to 40,000 people in the UK. A good chunk of that will involve leading edge technology, rather than the "screwdriver" projects to which, as MPs bemoaned yesterday, too much of inward investment in Britain is directed.

That is fine as far as it goes but the Eurofighter project should not be seen as a model for the future restructuring of the European defence industry as it strives to meet the challenge from the US. It is not just that France is missing. Even the French now appear to realise that going it alone is no longer an option, though they will still press ahead with the Rafale, a Eurofighter rival.

It is more that the politicking and horse trading of the "we are buying so many aircraft so we want an equivalent slice of the production cake" kind which has been the hallmark of the Eurofighter project to date is looking increasingly out of place.

Cost-effectiveness must replace carve-up if Europe's defence industry is to compete in the more straitened times which have replaced the free spending days of the cold war.

Wan won

MOODY'S decision to downgrade South Korea's foreign currency credit rating, alongside those of Thailand and Indonesia, to what amounts to junk status is more than simply a question of adding insult to the injury which the turbulence which has swept Asia's financial markets has inflicted on their economies.

Moody's decision means Korea will now find it has fresh funding problems. They will have to pay more for their money and will have, at best, limited access to the raft of private sector investors which have strict limits on the amount of junk-rated paper they can hold. The subsequent fall in the Korean won will only add to the country's troubles.

The rating agency can hardly be blamed for its hard-line stance. No one can be quite sure just when and at what cost the Asian contagion will finally be contained and confidence restored — though critics (especially those with long positions in Korean debt) might argue that Moody's should have spotted the problems a tad earlier.

There is, however, a further unfortunate consequence. Korea's problems are primarily with its corporate and banking sectors. It is they, not the government, which is up to its eyeballs in dollar-denominated debt. The Moody's decision means that it will be left to government-funded institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to provide the funds Korea needs. The role of the private sector will be much restricted.

Why should that be unfortunate? Because rich-country taxpayers, who might accept the need to bail-out countries, will be rather more reluctant to see their money go to prop up ailing corporates just because of the amount they have borrowed.

Financial discipline

I WANT, runs the sergeant-major's parade-ground rap, three volunteers: you, you and you. Life is a little more difficult when you're Chancellor in a civilian government, seeking volunteers for the task of rooting out economic crime and fraud. Those you "volunteer" may de-volunteer themselves double-quick.

Gordon Brown and his lieutenant i/c fraud and pensions mis-selling, economic secretary Helen Liddell, thought they had their man in Howard Davies, chairman of the Financial Services Authority. After all, was not the FSA Mr Brown's invention? What is the point of dreaming up a new agency from scratch if you cannot tell it what to do?

Sad to say, Mr Davies has asked to be excused, pleading, not unreasonably, that he has enough on his plate regulating and supervising everything from the lone financial broker to NatWest and Barclays. There has been an exchange of letters and an exchange of carefully worded speeches.

Mr Davies may not yet have been granted his matron's pass, but a sure sign he is winning the arguments is the news that Mr Brown has found himself another volunteer — the British police force. Or rather, forces.

A letter of intent, signed by the Chancellor, provides for a significantly upgraded role for the police in fraud-fighting. The cost is, as yet, unknown.

Whether this is a sensible use of time and money given that the one obvious candidate — the Serious Fraud Office — is reeling from budget cuts, low morale and loss of personnel is open to question. But that's a soldier's life: we're here because we're here because we're here.

Or not, as the case may be.

Farewell to feel-good

Borrowers can breathe again as economy becomes less frantic

Charlotte Denny

FURTHER evidence emerged yesterday that the economy is running out of steam, boosting hopes that the cost of borrowing has peaked.

Government statisticians have revised down the figures for growth in the third quarter of the year from 0.9 per cent to 0.8 per cent, according to data released yesterday by the Office for National Statistics. The ONS said a cut in estimates of industrial growth over the quarter was the main reason for the revision.

"The figures are quite surprising. Interest rate bulls in the market will take some comfort from this," said Ciaran Barr, UK economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell in London. "At one point gross domestic product was being forecast at 1 per cent, now it's down to 0.8 per cent."

The revisions took the annual rate of growth down from 3.8 per cent to 3.7 per cent, suggesting that economic growth has slowed significantly from the second quarter of the year when ONS figures showed it expanding 1.1 per cent.

ONS statisticians have also cut estimates of the strength of consumer spending, one of the driving forces in the economy. Initial figures suggested that consumer spending grew by 1.2 per cent in the third quarter but yesterday the ONS reduced its estimate to 0.7 per cent.

They said the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales had checked spending and while there had been some recovery in October this was not included in yesterday's numbers. Separate ONS figures showed that the current account was in surplus over the same period, the fourth quarter in a row that Britain's trade and investment balance with the rest of the world has been positive.

The last time there was a current account surplus for 12 months was 1985.

The third quarter surplus of £500 million was substantially lower than the £1.4 billion recorded in the previous quarter. The ONS said a £700 million fall in balance on investment income was the main reason for the lower surplus.

City analysts said rapid appreciation in sterling over the summer was behind the drop in interest and dividend payments from investments abroad. But the pound's rise has so far failed to cause the expected crash in the trade deficit. The deficit on trade in goods and services improved by £200 million between the second and third quarters.

"They are a healthy set of figures," Geoffrey Dicks, of NatWest Markets, said. "This is a year which was supposed to be characterised by a consumer boom and a deteriorating balance of payments. So much for the traditional Achilles' heel of the British economy."

The ONS said, however, that a number of unusual items had propped up the trade balance in the last quarter, including the £400 million sale of an oil rig to Norway. Official figures showed a a slow down in export growth last month as manufacturers felt the pinch from the strength of sterling.

House price boom 'past its peak'

Rupert Jones

ESTATE agents are warning of a "dramatic" slowdown in the housing market following this year's succession of interest rate rises.

Next year's cut in mortgage interest tax relief is also expected to take its toll on the market.

The five rate rises since the election have dealt a blow to the housing market, according to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), whose report today comes in the wake of data showing a drop in mortgage lending.

It reinforces predictions by leading lenders that house price growth will moderate in 1998 and is definitely past its peak.

This time last year the net balance of estate agents reporting house price rises was 44 per cent — now it is just 21 per cent, the RICS said in its report on the three months ending November 30. This indicates the slowdown "is not solely due to the pre-Christmas lull".

Lenders say next year will see a return to a more moderate rate of growth. The Abbey National and Nationwide building societies forecast house price inflation of 5 per cent (against 9 per cent this year) and 7 per cent (compared with 12 per cent this year) respectively. The Halifax predicts growth of 5 per cent in 1998, compared with 6 per cent this year.

Some areas of London have seen prices rocket by as much as 40 per cent, but the capital is unlikely to see anything approaching these sorts of increases next year.

The Halifax believes London house price growth will fall back to below 10 per cent, with northern areas of the UK experiencing a slightly stronger performance.

MPs say regional bidding wars are costing dear

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

MEMBERS of Parliament yesterday called for a radical shake-up of inward investment policy to end bidding wars between rival regional agencies and to attract better-quality jobs.

In a report on co-ordination of inward investment, the Commons Trade and Industry Committee said the country's long-term interests could be harmed by the "unhelpful degree of internal competition for projects" between different regional agencies.

Recently the Northern Development Company, the north-east agency, has claimed that it was gazumped by Wales in a bid for a £30 million Taiwanese investment by Acer.

It also alleged unfair tactics were used to attract Europe's biggest investment project — the 6,000-job LG Electronics plant. The claims have been robustly rebutted by Welsh Secretary Ron Davies.

But the committee said: "There is no doubt in our minds that inward investors have in the past on occasions succeeded in persuading regional and territorial agencies to offer progressively more assistance than they originally felt was necessary to offer, and that as a result there has been an occasionally excessive level of public funding for such projects."

The problem could be resolved by greater openness, although it would be necessary to "preserve in decent obscurity some of the tricks of the trade" to avoid helping the UK's foreign competitors.

This could be achieved by divulging to the committee in confidence details of aid packages and by agencies publishing "broad indicative figures" of public funds used to secure investments in annual reports.

It was also necessary to have UK guidelines and consultation arrangements enshrined in a concordat which should include, if necessary, a code of conduct to prevent rival agencies poaching investment from within the UK, said the committee.

It said the Government should "urgently rethink" the rigid formula which ties aid to the number of jobs created or preserved.

"There is a danger that a system which counts heads as a way of measuring the level of assistance may lead to a bias towards those projects which are manpower-intensive, such as call centres, as opposed to high value-added, technologically advanced projects, or where follow-on supply-chain contracts are particularly valuable," said the committee.

"It is clearly in the national interest to devote proportionately more funds to projects which will generate further investment in 'turnkey' jobs."

Austin Reed buys troubled womenswear rival for £26m

Roger Cowe

UPMARKET clothing retailer Austin Reed yesterday came to the rescue of the troubled Country Casuals chain with an agreed £26 million takeover.

The deal will dramatically expand Austin Reed's womenswear business.

Colin Evans, chairman of Austin Reed, described the move as "a decisive step forward". His counterpart, John Ketteley said a takeover would enable his company "to realise its full potential sooner rather than later".

Country Casuals has spent much of this year in talks with two of its founders, Mark and Christina Bunce, who attempted a buy-out of the company. It has also had to deal with losses in manufacturing by selling the Lerose and Elvi factories.

Yesterday it revealed that sales this year have been below last year's £41 million. But that was partly due to a policy of selling for longer periods at full price.

Austin Reed, on the other hand, said current sales in its 48 shops were 6 per cent ahead of the same period last year. Its formal womenswear ranges were selling especially well.

Chairman Colin Evans said the company is now planning stand-alone shops which would concentrate on the formal clothes for which Austin Reed is best known.

Country Casuals, which has 66 shops and 109 concessions, will focus on its established market for mature women.

Mr Evans said yesterday: "Their range is rather fragmented, and they trade from a lot of very small spaces. We need to develop an individual handwriting for the brand."

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.489	France 9.65	Italy 2,856	Singapore 2.74
Austria 20.32	Germany 2.8873	Malta 0.53	South Africa 7.89
Belgium 59.60	Greece 457.09	Netherlands 3.2495	Spain 242.47
Canada 2.33	Hong Kong 12.55	New Zealand 2.81	Sweden 12.72
Cyprus 0.8466	India 65.39	Norway 11.83	Switzerland 2.33
Denmark 11.06	Ireland 1.1157	Portugal 295.37	Turkey 321,810
Finland 8.81	Israel 5.89	Saudi Arabia 6.14	USA 1.6295

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

The Guardian Tuesday December 23 1997

The Eurofighter, which will support 14,000 British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce workers plus a large number of sub-contractors PHOTOGRAPH: REUTERS

£32bn fillip for defence jobs as Eurofighter deal takes off

David Fairhall
Defence Correspondent

CONTRACTS worth £32 billion will be triggered by an agreement signed in Bonn yesterday between Britain, Germany, Italy and Spain to proceed with production of the Eurofighter, after years of political controversy and industrial delay.

Machine tools can now be purchased to create assembly lines in Warton, Lancashire, Munich, Turin and Madrid, so the first aircraft can be delivered in 2002.

Britain's share of the £40 billion bill will be £16 billion. At the peak of production, this will support a hi-tech workforce of 14,000 at British Aerospace, Rolls-Royce and a long list of sub-contractors including GEC-Marconi, Dowty, Lucas, Martin Baker, Normalair Garrett, Pilkington Thorn Optronics and Smiths Industries.

The RAF is committed to buying 232 Eurofighters — a number that will not publicly be questioned by the Government's defence review because it determines the UK's share of the four-nation industrial programme (the Germans are buying 180, the Italians 121 and the Spanish 87), but could be changed later. The RAF may not need as many as that to replace Jaguars and Tornado interceptors, but the order could be increased if Eurofighter were to replace Tornado bombers and Harriers as well.

In Bonn, the Defence Secretary, George Robertson, said Eurofighter was crucial not just for the RAF but the future of the European aerospace industry. "Eurofighter is ideally suited to meet the new turbulent challenges that have replaced the cold war," he said. "Recent operations in the Balkans and the Gulf have demonstrated the importance of effective air power in today's more uncertain world."

His German counterpart, Volker Ruhe, came close to cancelling the project on the grounds that the fall of the Berlin Wall made it superfluous. In Britain it has been criticised as an expensive product of cold war thinking and design. But the only aircraft that surpasses its performance is the American F-22 Raptor — which Mr Robertson said would deliver only 8 per cent more performance for an extra £8 billion.

ASIA IN TURMOIL/Abysmal credit rating will hit attempts to borrow way out of economic crisis

Tigers' debt junked

Laurie Laird

ASIA'S shaky financial systems suffered a fresh blow when the Moody's rating agency cut the debt ratings of several of the region's troubled tigers to so-called "junk" status. The move means they will face further trouble in raising money internationally.

Moody's, considered the arbiter of the safety of worldwide investments, said the debt of Indonesia, Korea and Thailand is now below investment grade. That means interest rates and the principle behind bonds issued by the countries is regarded as risky, making future borrowing more expensive.

Moody's cited recent currency devaluations in the three nations as the main factor in downgrading their debt ratings. The Indonesian rupiah, the Korean won and the Thai baht have all fallen by about 50 per cent against the dollar this year. Since governments and corporations linked to the three countries have borrowed heavily in dollars for several years, the cost of those debts has jumped by about 50 per cent when converted back to local currencies.

Some of the most prominent companies in the region are feeling the pinch. Indonesia's biggest car maker PT Astra holds foreign currency debts equal to more than 900 billion rupiah. But cash on hand totalled a bit more than 800 billion rupiah at the end of 1996 — which leaves the company insolvent on paper.

Yesterday's move by Moody's will exacerbate the problem, since battered corporations are unlikely to be able to tap international capital markets to make up shortfalls. Most banks and fund managers are prohibited from lending to borrowers whose existing debt is below investment grade.

Of the three nations, Korea holds the largest amount of outstanding corporate debt, and dealers in London report talk that several UK banks, including Abbey National, maintain an exposure to Korean companies. An Abbey spokesman yesterday confirmed that the bank holds a "very small" amount of Korean assets, but stressed they were of high quality and guaranteed by the state.

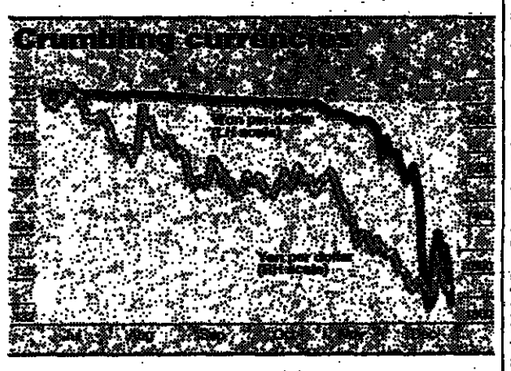
Asian currencies plunged following the release of yesterday's downgrade. The won slipped by more than nine per cent, to end at 1,710 to the dollar, while the baht ended at 44.25 to the dollar and the rupiah at approximately 5,145.

Asian stock markets, by comparison, took the Moody's news in their stride, with Korea's leading share index slipping one per cent — a modest fall by recent standards — to end at 396.06. Thai prices shedded two per cent to just under 377. Indonesia's market posted a one per cent gain, finishing at just under 396, but dealers reported very selective buying.

Moody's also said Japan's economic woes played a part in the decision to downgrade the three nations' debt since Japan's depressed consumers will be unable to buy a large portion of their goods even though they are cheaper thanks to the devaluations.

Furthermore, Japanese banks, facing mounting bad debts at home, are unlikely to continue bankrolling tottering Asian companies; Japanese banks hold the greatest portion of Asian debt. Japanese banks hold 29 trillion yen (£134 billion) in bad debts, according to data released yesterday by the finance ministry. The grim news pushed Japanese share prices to their lowest level in more than two years. The Nikkei 225 index lost more than 3 per cent of its value, falling below 15,000 to 14,799.40.

A Japanese broker grimacing yesterday as the Tokyo market plunged a further 3.4 per cent following a wave of corporate bankruptcies PHOTOGRAPH: SUSUMU TAKAHASHI



Vendôme wrapped up after luxury goods lose gloss

Financial staff

SWISS holding company Richemont yesterday sealed the takeover of luxury goods business, Vendôme — a deal made possible by the Asian turmoil that has hit Vendôme's sales.

Richemont, which owns 70 per cent of Vendôme, will pay 495p per share for the remaining 30 per cent. That values the whole of Vendôme at £3.5 billion. Shareholders will also receive a special interim dividend of 5p per share.

Vendôme shares have skidded this year from a high of 544p to a low of 321p. Asia accounts for nearly two-fifths of Vendôme's business, including brands such as Alfred Dunhill, Chloé and Piaget. In June, the company announced a four per cent drop in annual profits, and Richemont has taken advantage of Vendôme's falling share price to take it back into full ownership.

Richemont, which also owns tobacco giant Rothmans International and European pay television group Canal Plus, launched its surprise bid late last month.

It said then that the offer could lapse if Asian markets collapsed further. The company said yesterday that the offer "took account of the increasingly uncertain environment in which Vendôme operates".

The deal has to be approved by minority shareholders. Richemont says it believes its brands can be better served in private ownership.

"Richemont believes its investment plans for Vendôme can be implemented more effectively, and the interests of all Vendôme's shareholders will be better served, if Vendôme ceases to be publicly quoted," the companies said in a joint statement.

Bupa pays a healthy price for care firm

Roger Cowe

BUPA, the private health company, yesterday won its lengthy takeover battle for Care First, the market leader in private nursing and residential care.

Bupa overcame the opposition of Care First's board by increasing its offer to 170p per share — 13 per cent up on its original bid in November.

The price, which values Care First at £273 million, is 70 per cent higher than Care First's share price in October, when Bupa first approached the company in the hope of an agreed takeover. The knock-out blow ended plans for a rival offer by venture capitalists and the company's former chief executive, Chai Patel.

Bupa will now have 16,000 beds in long-term care homes, putting it well ahead of other operators, although that represents only 3 per cent of the total market.

Its chief executive, Peter Jacobs, said that Bupa was in a unique position to develop the Care First business. "We are in the business. We know about nursing homes. We are ready to develop a nationwide network. And we have the brand to do it," he said.

Keith Bradshaw, the chairman of Care First, said the increased offer was "good value for shareholders".

He said: "Ownership by Bupa will enable the group to offer good career opportunities for employees and provide high quality care for our residents."

Mr Bradshaw is to stay on as an adviser to Bupa for an unspecified period. Other Care First managers "should not be concerned about their future", Mr Jacobs said.

He said his first priority would be to assess the new acquisition. "We have to get our arms round the company, see what we've got and evaluate it. Then we want to integrate it into our care services division as quickly as possible."

Long-term care is a growing market because of the ageing population. The Government has made clear it wants demand to be satisfied predominantly by the private sector.

Mr Jacobs said Bupa's not-for-profit status was ideally suited to this market. He had no intention of converting the business into a public company. "This is a far more appropriate way of delivering health care than being a public company," he said.

The Care First acquisition will be paid for from Bupa's reserves and loan finance. But the deal still leaves the business with plenty of financial capacity for further deals, although Mr Jacobs said he did not anticipate more major acquisitions in long-term care.

News in brief

Coke buys Orangina from Pernod Ricard

COCA-Cola has agreed to buy the carbonated orange drink Orangina from Pernod Ricard of France for Fr5 billion (£507 million) as it expands its portfolio of beverage brands and builds sales in Europe.

Orangina's worldwide annual volume is 52 million cases distributed in 60 countries, and 80 per cent of its volume is in Europe. The drink, which contains real orange juice and pulp, sells about 1.5 million cases in the US.

The sale will allow Pernod Ricard, which makes Jameson and Wild Turkey whiskeys as well as the eponymous pastis, to focus on its more profitable spirits businesses. — *Bloomberg.*

Strikes to hit banks

THOUSANDS of workers at four banks are to strike tomorrow in disputes over working hours and pay. Members of the Banking Insurance and Finance Union at Midland and Royal Bank of Scotland branches in England and Wales will walk out in protest at longer working hours, while staff at the Yorkshire and Clydesdale banks are taking action over pay.

Midland, Yorkshire and Clydesdale members will strike all day, while Royal Bank employees will stop work at 1pm. Tens of thousands of staff are set to take part, said the union.

A Midland spokesman said: "We don't expect to close many, if any, of our branches." Yorkshire Bank said the action would have a minimal impact on its customer service. — *Rupert Jones*

Sell Reader's Digest call

CORPORATE Value Partners, which owns some 1.3 million Reader's Digest Association shares, urged the board to consider selling the publishing group or bringing in new management.

"All shareholders. . . would benefit dramatically from new, better governance and executive leadership or a sale of the entire company to a buyer who is better equipped to maximize the value of the company," it said in a letter to the DeWitt Wallace Reader's Digest Fund and the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund, which control 72 per cent of the company and have to reduce their holdings to avoid potentially crippling taxes. — *Reuter*

Diamond sales down

SOUTH African diamond giant De Beers said economic turmoil in Asia reduced its 1997 sales by 4 per cent to $4.64 billion (£2.8 billion) from $4.83 billion in the previous year. Sales in the second half of 1997 fell 16 per cent to $1.76 billion. — *Reuter*

Mirror chief unloads shares for third time

Simon Beavis
Media Business Editor

DAVID Montgomery, the chief executive of the Mirror Group, yesterday scooped a bumper pre-Christmas windfall worth nearly £690,000 when he traded in share options and ordinary shares for the third time in less than two years.

The group said the deal had been carried out in part so that Mr Montgomery could pay a tax bill, although it did not specify the size of the executive's liability.

Mr Montgomery exercised options to buy 500,000 shares at 61p, then immediately sold them at 195p. He also sold 10,000 ordinary shares at 195.5p to make a profit on the two transactions of £689,550.

The sale is the latest in a series which has raised a total of £2.4 million since March last year.

In 1996 Mr Montgomery raked in £1.4 million from the sale of share options, with a transaction in March raising £780,000 and a further deal in September netting another £600,000.

On top of that, he sold nearly £320,000-worth of ordinary shares in that month.

But Mr Montgomery remains richly endowed with options and shares. He has options on a further 79,409 at 61p, as well as on 163,755 at 229p and 189,731, which he can buy at 204.5p. Mirror Group's share price yesterday stood at 195.5p.

David Montgomery . . . faces tax liability

In addition, the Mirror Group chief holds 40,999 ordinary shares in the company, whose interests include the Mirror, the Sunday Mirror, the People, the Independent, the Independent on Sunday, and the Live TV cable channel.

The sale comes at a time when the City remains perplexed about the strategy of the Mirror Group and the shares have been fairly stagnant.

There have been persistent rumours that the Group is about to sell its interest in the Independent titles, possibly to the reclusive Barclay Brothers, while there have been calls for Mr Montgomery to pull off a big deal in TV to give the group a new spurt.

Mr Montgomery, formerly editor of the News of the World, took control of Mirror Group in 1991, shortly after the death of Robert Maxwell.

Mars attack leaves Wall's feeling chill from MMC

ROGER COWE reports on meltdown in the ice-cream distribution wars

BIRDS Eye Wall's was yesterday accused of anti-competitive practices and referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission after nearly two years of negotiations over the way it distributes Wall's ice-cream to the shops.

The reference follows a complaint from rival manufacturer Mars, which claimed it was being frozen out because of Wall's special distribution agreements.

The Office of Fair Trading said consumers were losing out because Wall's gives favourable terms to its network of dedicated wholesalers and to retailers who buy from them.

John Bridgeman, the Director General of Fair Trading, said the company had made some concessions in the lengthy negotiations but had not moved far enough.

"The undertakings Wall's was willing to provide did not meet all my concerns", Mr Bridgeman said.

The company said it welcomed the investigation but insisted that the changes it would introduce next year would result in a fair system. A spokeswoman said details of the changes could not be disclosed until they had been finalised with customers.

Tony Pearce, Birds Eye Wall's sales director, said: "We are confident that these new proposals, which amount to a restructuring of terms and discounts, will put beyond doubt the fairness and non-discriminatory basis of the system."

The issue which has proved a stumbling block in negotiations is Wall's network of 32 dedicated distributors, who cover all UK areas except for Greater London, which is serviced by Wall's own vans.

The distributors or concessionaires only handle Wall's ice-cream. They deal with Wall's on better terms than other wholesalers; and retailers who buy from them have better discounts.

A Wall's spokeswoman said yesterday: "They provide an unrivalled level of high quality service. Throughout the peak season they work round the clock, seven days a week."

But Mr Bridgeman said all wholesalers should be able to secure the same terms for the same service: "Wall's concessionaires have an excellent reputation with retailers. But there are other wholesalers who would like to provide just as good a service. If they can't supply on such good terms, many retailers will carry on buying from the concessionaires even if it means they can't get other popular brands of ice-cream."

The latest battle comes after several years of investigation. In 1994, the MMC cleared the practice of selling through dedicated freezer cabinets in shops.

هكذا من الأصل

Thrilling conclusion to the third leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race

High fives as hot sprint by EF Language translates into first spot

Untroubled waters . . . Paul Cayard's EF Language crosses the line by the Sydney Opera House in the race for the Volvo Trophy

PHOTOGRAPH: CLIVE MASON

Bob Fisher in Sydney

LIT by the flood of television lights and phosphorous flares, Paul Cayard's EF Language crossed the finishing line off the Opera House to cheering crowds ashore and a huge spectator fleet which had accompanied her down the harbour from the time she entered through the Heads in the darkness.

"That was a sailboat race," said the American skipper. Indeed it had never been equalled for the closeness of the racing nor the finish. Within 25 minutes of EF Language completing the 2,250-mile leg from Fremantle in just under 9½ days, six other boats had crossed the line, two less than a minute apart. Cayard and his crew had fought for the lead with Gunnar Krantz's Swedish Match for the final 48 hours, the lead swinging one way and then the other.

It was a triumphal passage to the line, the EF Language crew dropping her spinnaker as they turned into the harbour to come hard on the wind to miss the Sow & Pigs Reef. From there to Bradley's Head, sheets were cracked and the speed climbed to more than 13 knots as they changed to a bigger, reaching headsail. EF Language cleaved through the chop and the wakes of the spectator vessels and her crew high-fived in relief when they heard the finishing gun.

The toll of wear and tear was high: three boats had problems with their masts, and burst sails and broken halyards were common to all. For the 48 hours prior to the finish no one on any boat had had much sleep: Krantz and his crew were not only chasing EF Language but also having to fend off an attack by George Collins's Chessie Racing, the American boat finishing third, 53 seconds behind.

Two minutes later it was the turn of Grant Dalton with Merit Cup and a similar time separated the New Zealander from Knut Frostad's Innovation Kvaerner. Ten minutes later the battle of the British skippers, Paul Standbridge with Toshiba and Lawrie Smith in Silk Cut, was resolved in the former's favour.

Roy Heiner's BrunelSunergy was eighth, 47 minutes ahead of the all-women crew of EF Education. EF Language's win makes her the overall leader after three of the seven legs. Innovation Kvaerner is second and Swedish Match third.

Cricket

Knight moves to make up for his lost time

David Hopps on the A team captain's determination to emulate Adam Hollioake in Kenya and Sri Lanka in the new year

THE heartening sound of an England squad learning the joys of touring again has not been lost on Nick Knight as he prepares to lead the A team this winter in Kenya and Sri Lanka.

The enthusiasm of Adam Hollioake's one-day party as they won the Sharjah tournament created such a favourable impression that it must be hoped that such an upbeat mood will survive all winter.

Knight is capable of playing his part. In captaincy terms he remains a novice, as his experiences at Warwickshire last season emphasised, but in handling the personal upheaval of an overseas tour he has already proved himself more adept than most.

Even before the sparkle of Hollioake's one-day tourists pointed the way forward, Knight was a convert to the belief that surmounting the frustrations of touring is a necessary first step towards success on the field. When England fly out to Kenya early next week he can begin to put his conclusions into practice.

"These can be two demanding countries," he said, "but the guys are going to have to get on with it. If they don't then maybe they won't ever go on another tour. Whatever the hardships, we have to enjoy it and any complaining has to be stamped on straight away. Sure the 8.05 bus might not arrive at 8.05, but what the hell, these are great places to tour. I want to convey that when it gets hard we have to stick together and laugh.

"As a first-time tourist I used to lock myself away in my room. Now I realise that getting out, and trying to appreciate the country, helps you to survive the pressure of the game itself.

"Preaching that is only half the battle. I'd be the first to admit that my attitude hasn't always been spot on."

A squads have become younger by the year, and this one, though leavened by a couple of seasoned performers in Steve James and Mark Ealham, who both might be regarded as cover for the senior squad in the West Indies, embodies a statement that England are committed to testing the mettle of their best young players at an earlier age.

Half have graduated from last summer's Under-19 side, including that team's captain Andrew Flintoff, his fellow batsmen David Sales and Owais Shah and two highly capable left-armers, the spinner Dean Cosker and the fast bowler Paul Hutchison. The wicketkeepers, Nash and Read, are virtually unknown outside age-group cricket, as is Essex's off-spinner Jonathan Powell.

Knight . . . unlucky year

The most intriguing selection, though, is Ben Hollioake, a hugely gifted individual whose talents have yet to be channelled effectively. Adam Hollioake is adamant that his younger brother's natural talent must be allowed full licence and that he will learn from his mistakes. Knight is of similar conviction but will not welcome a surfeit of character-building blunders in the weeks ahead.

Knight is due a change of luck. Since he broke a finger last winter he has lost his Test opening place to the more discriminating, if less exciting, talents of Surrey's Mark Butcher.

The challenge presented at Warwickshire last summer when he stood in as captain for the injured Tim Munton also arrived prematurely. "I had been elected vice-captain and thought I had a chance to learn the ropes," he said, "but before I knew it I was in charge.

"Looking back, I didn't do a great job. I had too many set opinions. I'm big on fitness and preparation and thought that everybody should do it my way. Maybe I should have realised faster that people have their own approaches."

And, if that was not enough, next season Knight is vice-captain at Warwickshire to Brian Lara. The rumbles and grumbles over Lara's appointment suggest that life will be nothing if not interesting. No wonder Knight plans to make the most of his winter abroad.

ENGLAND A SQUAD: N V Knight (capt, Warwickshire), S P James (Glamorgan), D L Maddy (Leicestershire), A Flintoff (Lancashire), D J Sales (Northamptonshire), O A Shah (Middlesex), B C Hollioake (Surrey), M A Ealham (Kent), C M W Read (Gloucestershire, wkt), D C Nash (Middlesex, wkt), J C Powell (Essex), A F Giles (Warwickshire), D A Cosker (Glamorgan), C E W Silverwood, P M Hutchison (both Yorkshire), J Ormond (Leicestershire).

India's men and woman enjoy a winning day

INDIA recorded a five-wicket victory over South Africa in Patna yesterday to reach the semi-finals of the women's World Cup. They bowled out South Africa for 80 in 43.1 overs and reached their target in 28 to earn a meeting with Australia.

South Africa never got to grips with the spinner Deepa Kulkarni, who in 9.1 overs, seven of them maidens, took two wickets for four runs.

India's men also had a good day, cruising to a seven-wicket victory in Guwahati in their one-day international against Sri Lanka.

Sachin Tendulkar played a key role after the World Cup holders had made 172 for nine. He hit 82 not out but was beaten to the Man of the Match award by the all-rounder Robin Singh, who returned career-best bowling figures of five for 22.

England Under-19 secured the first win of their tour by beating South African Schools Colts by 28 runs in Zwide, but they were made to sweat by the all-rounder Dumisa Makalima. After the tourists had made 265 for nine Makalima, dropped before he had scored, hit 77 off 56 balls with seven sixes.

In Brisbane, South Africa's four-day match against Australia A faded away to a tame draw when the tourists opted for batting practice in the run-up to this week's first Test against Australia.

Resuming at 114 for three with a lead of 242 on the final day, South Africa batted well past lunch before declaring at 220 for seven. The hosts, needing 348 to win in less than two sessions, reached 122 for one.

Graham Gooch, the former England captain, has joined Durham as a consultant and batting coach, and Surrey have appointed Keith Medlycott as cricket manager in place of David Gilbert, who left the club in October and joined Sussex.

Dick Spooner, the former Warwickshire and England wicketkeeper, has died in Torbay aged 77.

Swimming

Coaches plan drugs split

Steven Downes

THE world's top coaches are planning a coup which could split the sport only days before the world championships begin in Perth, Western Australia.

John Leonard, the outspoken head of the American Swimming Coaches' Association, has thrown down the gauntlet to the world governing body Fina, accusing its officials of having "allowed our sport to degenerate into a morass" over the issue of drugs.

Leonard's proposals would see the setting-up of a new body, the World Swimming Organisation, which will aim for drug-free competition, the representation of swimmers and coaches on the world body and financial rewards for leading performers. More than 3,000 have signed the document, including 900 Olympians and their coaches.

Among the strongest advocates of Leonard's breakaway plan are coaches in Canada, Australia and the United States, the three powers of swimming until the 1994 world championships when Chinese women won 12 of the 16 titles available.

A year later seven Chinese swimmers failed drug tests and China were excluded from the 1995 Pan-Pacific Championships. They had a poor Olympics in Atlanta but two months ago further record-breaking performances at their national games revived suspicions that Chinese performances were due to more than hard work.

"We have seen it happen before with East Germany," Leonard said. "There is no reason why we should stand by and watch it happen all over again."

The British Swimming Coaches' Association is among the signatories to Leonard's plan — with reservations. Mike Drew, a BSCA past president, said yesterday: "We are concerned with the inability to conduct proper drug tests but we are also worried at the hypocrisy inherent in such moves.

"You could get any group of coaches into a room together and they would all be in favour of a four-year ban, if not a life ban. But the moment one of their own swimmers is accused the excuses start."

● Ireland's triple Olympic gold medallist Michelle de Bruin will miss next month's world championships. She said she had been unable to train properly since a car accident in October.

Snooker

Challenge to ruling body over disqualified votes

Clive Everton

IN THE latest twist to the game's civil war, a move to freeze the activities of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association will be made in the High Court this afternoon unless the governing body responds by lunch-time to a request for a voluntary undertaking.

An injunction is being sought by Gerry Sinclair on behalf of Stephen Hendry and other players managed by Ian Doyle, and on behalf of Mark Wildman and Jim Chambers who were controversially deposed from the WPBSA's board at its annual general meeting last Friday.

The proposed undertaking would, Sinclair said, "prevent the WPBSA taking any steps, including the co-option of directors, which would prejudice the reappointment of Wildman and Chambers" or entering into contracts that might not be legally sustainable because the board had been "improperly convened".

Sinclair alleges that the association's chairman Rex Williams and his legal advisers acted beyond their powers in disqualifying the votes of Wildman and Chambers in the agm's 50-man electorate. Wildman was ousted 25–23; the vote on Chambers was 24–24 and Williams gave his casting vote against.

"The decision to disqualify the [two directors'] votes was fatally flawed," Sinclair said. "The use of the casting vote was against custom and practice, as was his removal of the right of proxy holders to raise points of order."

● New Earth Water Services has ended its agreement for Peter Ebdon to wear its logo in televised events. "We can't be associated with what's going on at the moment," said its chairman Jim Wibbley.

Racing

Outlook not very bright at Brighton

Ken Oliver

THE future of Brighton racecourse is in jeopardy after the local council turned down a £20 million leisure complex facelift proposal.

Arena Leisure, who manage Brighton along with Lingfield, Folkestone, Plumpton and Fontwell, will pull out of running the track after their proposal for a 60-year lease, which would have included an hotel and sports bar open 364 days a year, was rejected.

A letter from the Brighton and Hove Council's Arts, Recreation and Tourism committee informed Arena Leisure, parent company of Lingfield Park racecourse, that the council would not be progressing Arena's proposal.

Graham Parr, Arena chief executive, said: "I am surprised that the council did not see fit to take advantage of the major investment we were prepared to inject into the Brighton racecourse.

"I believe that unless substantial monies are forthcoming for the buildings, and redevelopment of the track, serious problems will occur in the not too distant future. However, I also understand the lessees position with regard to retaining control of what they regard as a community facility, but it was not the intention of Arena Leisure to remove the community aspect, only to improve dramatically the facilities available to all the ratepayers of Brighton.

The racecourse has been rumoured to have been under threat for some time and Arena were aiming to alleviate this with their rescue project.

Stockton, in 1981, was the last British racecourse to close.

Mark Dwyer, the 34-year-old jockey, has retired from riding after spending a year on the sidelines.

He rode more than 800 winners, but has been out of action since last December after suffering a compound fracture of his left elbow.

Dwyer met Michael Turner, the Jockey Club's chief medical advisor, yesterday and said afterwards: "That is it, I have packed up. Basically, I am fit enough to ride but not fit enough to fall — that is the top and bottom of it. Doctor Turner felt that it was an achievement in itself to have got the arm as good as it is now. But he also said that to put it under threat again would be inadvisable.

"I had always hoped the arm would improve more than it has, but sadly that has not proved to be the case. The good thing is, it doesn't stop me doing anything I want to do in day-to-day life which is the most important thing.

"I suppose I am sad that it has come to this, but I have been riding for 20 years and all good things must come to an end."

Results

RICHARD DUNWOODY will ride What A Hand in Saturday's Coral Welsh National at Chepstow.

Paul Nicholls, who trains the gelding, said: "He has come out of his Sandown race fine and is in good order. He has finished second to Banjo and second to Samlee and will appreciate the soft ground at Chepstow as he has not had that yet.

"It is a very competitive race with a lot with good chances but he would have to be a leading fancy."

Nicholls, whose stable-jockey Timmy Murphy is currently sidelined by suspension, will wait until the last possible moment before engaging a rider for Belmont King in the race.

LINGFIELD

12.30 (5f): 1, FRIENDLY BRAVE, R Hughes (2-1 fav); **2, Goodbye Gatemen** (7-1); **3, Rowlandsons Stud** (12-1). 8 ran. Sh hd, 2. (Miss Gay Kelleway) Tote: £2.20; £1.10, £1.80, £8.00. Dual F: £4.50. CSF: £14.37. Tricast: £118.22.

1.00 (5f): 1, JUST DISSIDENT, M Tebbutt (11-8 fav); **2, Imp Express** (11-2); **3, Mister Raider** (8-2). 8 ran. ¾, 2½. (R Whitaker) Tote: £2.70; £1.20, £1.10, £2.30. Dual F: £3.80. CSF: £8.84. Tricast: £25.82.

1.30 (6f): 1, TANGERINE FLYER, P Roberts (7-2); **2, Best of Our Days** (4-1); **3, Pearly Queen** (5-1). 3-1 fav Precious Princess. 8 ran. 3, 2½. (J Berry) Tote: £5.20; £1.60, £1.20, £2.10. Dual F: £9.00. CSF: £18.54.

2.00 (6f): 1, BLUE SHADOW, T Williams (7-1); **2, Wolfhunt** (9-4 fav); **3, Batchworth Belle** (100-30). 10 ran. 1¾, 1¾. (R Hannon) Tote: £7.80; £2.00, £1.60, £1.20. Dual F: £8.90. Trio: £16.80. CSF: £22.08. Tricast: £60.58.

2.30 (7f): 1, WITCHFINDER, S Whitworth (3-1); **2, Castle Ashby Jack** (10-1); **3, Misconduct** (6-1). 15-8 fav Super Monarch. 15 ran. 6, nk. (Mrs L Stubbs) Tote: £4.40; £1.10, £2.60, £1.30. Dual F: £9.80. Trio: £19.70. CSF: £29.88.

3.00 (1m 2f): 1, CLASSIC FIND, M Fenton (6-1); **2, Confronter** (12-1); **3, Chingachgook** (20-1). 3-1 fav Polished Steel. 14 ran. 1¾, 1¾. (Pat Mitchell) Tote: £8.40; £2.70, £3.00, £5.60. Dual F: £57.20. Trio: £779.10. CSF: £75.33. Tricast: £1,285.10.

3.30 (1m 5f): 1, NIGHT CITY, P Doe (2-1 fav); **2, Tarry** (4-1); **3, Sedan** (14-1). 8 ran. 2, ¾. (K Burke) Tote: £3.80; £2.00, £1.50, £3.00. Dual F: £7.70. CSF: £9.81. Tricast: £80.42.

PLACEPOT: £39.30. **QUADPOT:** £30.00.

LUDLOW

12.40 (2m Hdle): 1, STAGE PASS, R Farrant (12-1); **2, Nizar** (7-2); **3, Mirleo** (6-4 fav). 10 ran. 4, 8. (G Barnett) Tote: £10.70; £1.70, £2.40, £1.20. Dual F: £18.70. Trio: £20.30. CSF: £47.75.

1.10 (2m 5f 110yds Hdle): 1, VISCOUNT TULLY, R Thornton (13-2); **2, Ya Ula** (8-1); **3, Arioso** (12-1); **4, Barrybeen** (10-1). 6-1 fav Weather Wise. 17 ran. 1¾, 8, 2½. (C Jackson) Tote: £7.90; £1.90, £3.10, £3.20, £3.90. Dual F: £22.90. Trio: £133.40. CSF: £55.54. Tricast: £571.61.

1.40 (2m Ch): 1, GALE TOI, A P McCoy (3-1); **2, Stompin** (3-1); **3, Charming Girl** (Evens fav). 6 ran. 1½, ¾. (P Mullins) Tote: £4.80; £2.20, £2.60. Dual F: £8.60. CSF: £11.64. NR: Avanti Express, Just For A Reason.

2.10 (2m 5f 110yds Hdle): 1, OH DONNA, M A Fitzgerald (2-1 fav); **2, Hot 'n Saucy** (10-1); **3, Super Saffron** (20-1). 16 ran. 3, 3. (N Henderson) Tote: £3.30; £1.50, £3.60, £5.00. Dual F: £38.50. Trio: £324.30. CSF: £22.39.

2.40 (3m Ch): 1, FORTUNES COURSE, W Marston (6-1); **2, Millwood Castle** (9-4 fav); **3, Dromhana** (13-2). 8 ran. Sh hd, dist. (J King) Tote: £7.00; £2.20, £1.10, £2.30. Dual F: £9.10. CSF: £19.52. Tricast: £84.18.

3.10 (2m 4f Ch): 1, MR STRONG GALE, R Dunwoody (7-4 fav); **2, Trail Boss** (10-1); **3, Jason's Boy** (7-1). 7 ran. 3½, 3. (P Nicholls) Tote: £2.50; £1.40, £3.20. Dual F: £14.80. CSF: £17.77.

3.40 (2m Hdle): 1, ROAD RACER, J A McCarthy (5-2 jnt-fav); **2, Isitoff** (4-1); **3, Ismeno** (5-2 jnt-fav). 8 ran. 9, 4. (P Webber) Tote: £3.40; £1.20, £1.30, £1.30. Dual F: £7.10. Trio: £5.60. CSF: £12.63. NR: Impending Danger.

PLACEPOT: £95.20. **QUADPOT:** £29.70. **JACKPOT:** £36,822.00.

● Kelso's pre-Christmas meeting yesterday fell victim to the weather for the fourth year in succession when the track was hit by fog. Officials took several looks at the course and put the start time back 30 minutes to 1.20 but at 1.05pm, with the runners in the paddock for the first race, the meeting was called off.

● Newton Abbot's Boxing Day fixture is in doubt and there will be a course inspection at noon tomorrow. The going is currently heavy and more rain is forecast.

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The Guardian INTERACTIVE

The Guardian Tuesday December 23 1997

Football

Newcastle dismiss bid for Asprilla

Michael Walker

NEWCASTLE United have dismissed an approach from Parma to buy back Faustino Asprilla. Parma contacted Newcastle, to whom they sold Asprilla in February 1996, last week but Kenny Dalglish is believed to have given short shrift to an offer below the £6.7 million the Magpies paid to the Italian club.

Parma, lying fourth in Italy's Serie A, have serious designs on a return to the Champions League next season and are thought to have lined up a combination of Asprilla and the River Plate striker Marcello Salas, the Chilean whom Manchester United were considering signing.

However, it seems that Salas will not leave South America until next summer and, with Newcastle out of Europe, Parma have turned their attention to Asprilla. Newcastle might view this as the moment to cash in on the Colombian's high standing and he himself may well fancy a return to Italy.

Parma's president Stefano Tanzi is a personal friend and the prospect of a huge hike in wages might also tempt the striker, who has the same agent as Salas, Gustavo Moscardi. Newcastle, meanwhile, have announced that they are to increase St James' Park's capacity from its present 36,800 to 51,000.

Joe Royle will decide in the new year whether to take the job of Northern Ireland coach. The former Everton manager was interviewed at the end of last week by Jim Boyce, president of the Irish Football Association, who said: "We had an excellent meeting and we were very impressed.

"I'm going away on a week's holiday over Christmas and Joe has said he will ring me early in the new year to let me know if he still wants his name to be in the frame for the job."

The celebrity cook Delia Smith has become the majority shareholder of First Division Norwich City. Together with her husband Michael Wynn Jones she has bought the 42 per cent shareholding of the president Geoffrey Watling for an undisclosed sum.

The former Leeds United defender Mel Sterland has been appointed manager of Stalybridge Celtic in the Vauxhall Conference. His assistant will be Imre Varadi.

The Labour MP Tom Pendry will become chairman of the Football Trust when Lord Aberdare retires in the new year.

Light on his feet . . . the Frenchman Patrick Vieira is tackled by Wimbledon's Staale Solbakken before floodlight failure at 0–0 halted progress at Selhurst Park last night GARY PRIOR

Villa demolished in virus attack

ASTON VILLA have been struck by a virus as they prepare for their Boxing Day meeting with Tottenham at Villa Park. The captain Gareth Southgate, Steve Staunton and the goalkeeper Michael Oakes were all confined to bed yesterday.

Mark Draper has also been off-colour for several days while Ian Taylor complained of feeling unwell at the end of yesterday's training session.

Villa's manager Brian Little said: "We have a bit of a problem but we will crack on and hope that people are right in time for Friday."

Oakes is likely to be replaced by Mark Bosnich who will be available after returning from Confederations Cup duty with Australia in Riyadh.

Derby County's defender Igor Stimac will miss next year's World Cup. Stimac has been left out of a squad of 30 which the Croatian coach Miroslav Blazevic will reduce to 22 by next summer.

Stimac, who was signed from Hajduk Split 2½ years ago, was a key member of the Croatian squad which reached the quarter-finals of Euro 96. But the 30 year-old player, with more than 20 full caps, has been handicapped by a back problem for the majority of this season. He was sidelined for two months from early October and, after returning for two games, suffered a recurrence of the injury.

Stimac's Derby team-mate and playmaker Aljosa Asanovic and the Everton defender Slaven Bilic have been both named in the squad.

The Reading defender Paul Bodin and the Wolves midfielder Paul Simpson are hoping that video evidence can clear their names after they were both sent off for the first time last Saturday.

The referee Steve Bennett showed the Welsh international Bodin the first red card of his 17-year career after an incident involving the Wolves midfielder Robbie Keane.

The young Irishman went down in the penalty area but Bennett overlooked his claims for a spot-kick.

Simpson was dismissed for the first time in his 16-year career for retaliation against Reading's midfielder Phil Parkinson.

The Republic of Ireland defender Alan Kernaghan is in demand by Manchester City and St Johnstone. Kernaghan completed a three-month loan spell with the Scottish Premier Division club last weekend and is known to be eager to stay there. But the stumbling-block is whether City are prepared to cut their losses on a player they signed for £1.6 million, with Saints hoping for a free transfer.

West Ham are to ask the referee Gerald Ashby to reconsider his decision to send off their midfielder Steve Lomas at Blackburn last Saturday. Lomas faces a possible four-match ban and fine after pulling Ashby's arm when the official rejected a penalty appeal.

Barnsley to back banned defender

BARNSLEY appear to be prepared to stand by Dean Jones, their 20-year-old defender who was yesterday banned for three months by the Football Association after failing a drugs test at the club's training ground in October.

The club's chairman John Dennis and manager Danny Wilson are unlikely to follow the lead taken by several other clubs and sack Jones, the first Premiership player to fail a test. He pleaded guilty at a hearing in London but claimed he took the substance at a night-club to keep him awake, not to enhance his performance.

Barnsley look set to give Jones a severe rap over the knuckles. His ban runs from November 17, when he was first suspended, until February and he will also have to be available for random drug-testing.

Jones, who has yet to play for the first team, admitted to being "very foolish" and Barnsley's secretary Michael Spink said: "The player is full of remorse and until now has been a model professional."

Just over a year ago Leyton Orient sacked the defender Roger Stanislaus, given a one-year ban by the FA after being found guilty of using cocaine, and the Huddersfield striker Craig Whittington was dismissed after becoming the first English player to test positive for cannabis twice.

More recently Charlton's former England Under-21 international Jamie Stuart was sacked after he tested positive for cocaine and marijuana.

Hinchcliffe for Iversen deal back on cards

THE knock-on effect of the return to White Hart Lane of Jürgen Klinsmann may end Andy Hinchcliffe's Everton career, writes Ian Ross.

A fortnight ago, before the prospect of Klinsmann re-signing for Tottenham arose, the Spurs coach Christian Gross offered to exchange his club's Norwegian striker Steffen Iversen for Hinchcliffe and a deal would have gone through but for a valuation dispute.

Gross pushed for a straight swap but Kendall insisted on a cash adjustment of at least £1 million. Talks broke down but, with Iversen now likely to be surplus to requirements, a reopening of negotiations looks likely.

The former France striker Mickael Madar will arrive on Merseyside this morning hoping to complete a free transfer between Deportivo La Coruña and Everton. The 29-year-old will have a medical but it is unlikely he will complete transfer formalities in time to play on Boxing Day at Manchester United.

Everton's promising young striker Danny Cadamarteri will pledge his future to the club today by signing an improved 4½-year contract.

Liverpool yesterday signed the Iceland Under-21 international forward Haukur Gudnason from Keflavik. Their down payment of £150,000 may rise to £500,000 if he progresses through the Anfield ranks.

Rugby League

Wigan look to Monie for a winter warmer

Andy Wilson meets the coach who believes the Boxing Day derby against St Helens will be contested for the final time on Friday

NEW recruits to Wigan are given a greeting as traditional in its own way as the Maori *haka*. They are guaranteed within days of their arrival to be assailed by a fan — Va'aiga Tuigamala was pushed into a fridge at the local grocer's by a passionate old lady — and told: "Beat St Helens on Boxing Day and win the Challenge Cup at Wembley and you'll be all right by us."

However, there has been no such inauguration ceremony for John Monie since he arrived from Sydney last month to take over as coach from Eric Hughes. Monie, the fans figure, knows the drill: in each of his previous four seasons as Wigan coach, between 1989 and 1993, the club did the league and cup double.

The regime that wrested control from the former chairman Jack Robinson in August brought Monie back in the hope not only of boosting their own credibility but also of winning the Super League at the third attempt and restoring the club as Britain's top dogs.

But before Super League kicks off in April, Monie has two familiar tasks: taking Wigan to the Challenge Cup final and ensuring that St Helens are beaten on Boxing Day.

Times have changed enormously since his last Christmas derby, in 1992. Within two years of his departure to lead the newly formed Auckland Warriors into the Australian competition, Maurice Lindsay, who had been his chairman at Wigan, had followed his advice and switched to a summer season.

However, the Boxing Day derby remains as a one-off "winter challenge" which last year attracted a crowd of 16,000. Monie appreciates the fixture's importance to the fans but believes it has run its course.

"I think this could be the last Boxing Day game," he said. "When the English fans have come around to the idea of summer rugby league, which was always going to take some time, they aren't going to miss watching games in the sort of weather we had last week."

Monie thought he had seen his last English winter when he headed for Auckland. "Had I run my contract out with Auckland, I planned to do perhaps one more year with them and then retire," he explained. But in June, with 18 months of his contract remaining and the Warriors bottom of the Australasian Super League, he was sacked.

"They said we hadn't won enough games and that they wanted to get a club full of New Zealanders. That left a bad taste in my mouth; I didn't want to finish like that."

The Auckland episode was the first blot on Monie's reputation. Finding no doors open to him back home in Sydney, he was receptive to Wigan's approach.

"I hadn't intended to come back to England to coach but you've got to go to work," he said. "There are only 10 Super League clubs in Australia and they all have coaches, so the next best thing was to come to England."cw0

Monie will be hard pushed to do any better than Howard Kendall in disproving the theory that you should never go back. The impossibly high standards of his previous stint at Wigan have provoked formidable expectations, yet the circumstances are very different from those he faced in 1989.

Then, thanks to the foresight of Lindsay and of Monie's predecessor as coach, the New Zealander Graham Lowe, Wigan were way ahead of their rivals in playing strength and off-field preparations. Leeds were the only club who tried to match them by going full-time.

Now, however, all 12 Super League clubs are full-time. The standard of coaching is also far higher, exemplified by a new breed of Australians such as Shaun McRae at St Helens, Stuart Raper at Castleford and shortly Graham Murray at Leeds. Moreover, Wigan do not enjoy the same advantage in playing talent, although they possess in Jason Robinson, Gary Connolly and Andy Farrell the crown jewels of the British game and have had their squad strengthened by the return of Denis Betts and the arrival of four quality Australians, the last of whom, Danny Moore, accepted a three-year contract yesterday.

"Everybody must realise that Wigan have fallen off the top perch and behind clubs like Bradford, Leeds and in particular London, who look like they will be very strong," Monie admitted, "so it might take us a while." Beating St Helens on Friday would be a good, if irrelevant, start.

● Warrington have signed the 23-year-old Australian stand-off Mike Eager from South Queensland.

Monie . . . high standards

American Football

Sanders rushes 2,000 yards into play-offs

Mark Tran in New York

BARRY SANDERS lifted the Detroit Lions into the play-offs and sealed his place in NFL history by becoming only the third player to rush for more than 2,000 yards in a season.

Sanders is not even as fast as he used to be; these days he can be caught from behind. But a better appreciation of the game has more than compensated for any loss of speed. His stop-start style, his sudden changes in direction and sheer power have carried him into an elite otherwise comprising only O J Simpson and Eric Dickerson, who was in the Pontiac Silverdome on Sunday cheering him on.

Sanders was bottled up until half-time, when the New York Jets led 10-3, but broke out on the last play of the third quarter, knifing through the Jets for a 47-yard gain. Three plays later he burst through for a 15-yard touchdown run and Detroit's winning points.

He passed the 2,000 mark in the fourth quarter with a two-yard run, then uncorked a 53-yard dash in the closing moments to squelch any Jets comeback hopes. He finished the game with 184 yards, bringing his season's tally to 2,053 yards.

"I have learned to be patient," said Sanders, a softly spoken and modest player. "We just stuck with it. The most significant thing was to win the game and to make sure we would be playing next week. The 2,000 yards was secondary."

The Lions won 13–10 to earn a wild-card spot and a trip to Tampa Bay in the first round of the play-offs. For the Jets, revitalised this season under Bill Parcells, the defeat was terminal. They were left one win short of the play-offs.

The Lions' celebrations were tempered by an injury to Reggie Brown, who received mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on the field. He suffered a bruise to his spine at the neck but is expected to recover without permanent damage.

The play-off picture is virtually complete. The Green Bay Packers, the champions, and the San Francisco 49ers look the likeliest winners of Super Bowl XXXII, in San Diego on January 25. The best prospects from the AFC, whose clubs have been on the losing end for 13 successive years, are the Kansas City Chiefs, the Denver Broncos and the Pittsburgh Steelers.

NFL PLAY-OFFS: AFC: Conference semi-finals: Kansas City, Pittsburgh. **Wild-card round:** Denver v Jacksonville, New England v Miami. **NFC: Conference semi-finals:** San Francisco, Green Bay. **Wild-card round:** New York Giants v Minnesota, Tampa Bay v Detroit.

Ice Hockey

Bees lose some sting with Bucsis

Vic Batchelder

THE Bracknell Bees coach Jim Fuyarchuk was yesterday hoping for "a great Christmas present" in the form of a replacement for his top scorer Wayde Bucsis.

The Canadian forward, who has scored 15 goals in 29 games this season, yesterday flew to Norway, where his wife and family are based, to attend to what a club spokesman termed a "personal crisis back home".

He has been released from his contract and will not return to the Bees this season. His last game was Sunday's 6–0 defeat at Ayr, where Mark Woolf led the Scottish side's scoring with two goals.

Fuyarchuk knows it will not be easy replacing someone he yesterday described as "a big part of our line-up. We use him on the powerplay and penalty-killing units and he is a very versatile, very solid all-round player".

The deadline for registering players was December 15 but Bracknell have been granted special dispensation by the Superleague to sign a replacement. They will certainly not have any newcomer available for tonight's home game against the Manchester Storm, who continue to head the league despite Sunday's 7–1 defeat in Cardiff.

"Our aim is get someone in the line-up as quickly as possible but it's not easy at this time of the season," said Fuyarchuk. "All this happened so quickly that we had no chance [for tonight's game]."

The British Ice Hockey Association has accepted an offer from Hull City Council's sports development unit to co-host the end-of-season British League play-offs at the 2,000-capacity home of the Kingston Hawks. The overall value of the package is "in the region of £50,000", including £17,000 in prize-money.

Results

Football

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP

Wimbledon (0) 0 Arsenal (0) 0
22,832
(abandoned after 45min, floodlight failure)

RYMAN LEAGUE: Full Members Cup: Second round: Carshalton Ath 1, Aldershot Tn 0; Croydon 0, Whyteleafe 2; Dagenham & Red 3, Romford 0.
PONTINS LEAGUE: Premier Division: Liverpool 1, Sheff Wed 0; Preston 2, Birmingham 0.
AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First Division: Norwich 0, Millwall 1, Southampton 0, Charlton 0.
CONFEDERATIONS' CUP: Final: Australia 0, Brazil 6.

Basketball

NBA: Cleveland 105, Utah 101; Boston 99, LA Clippers 77, Vancouver 88, Portland 86.

Chess

FIDE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP (Groningen): **Quarter-finals:** B Gelfand (Bela) bt A Dreev (Rus) 2½-1½, N Short (Eng) bt M Krasenkov (Pol) 2-0; V Anand (Ind) bt A Shirov (Sp) 1½-½; M Adams (Eng) bt L van Wely (Neth) 2½-1½. **Semi-finals:** Gelfand v Anand, Adams v Short (first name player white).

Cricket

SHEFFIELD SHIELD: Hobart: Victoria 180-9 dec and 348 (L Harper 152). Tasmania 130 and 401-3 (D Hills 205, J Cox 95). Tasmania won by seven wickets. **Adelaide:** South Australia 388 (D Webber 145) and 168 (Robertson 5-37). New South Wales 519 (S Lee 183no, R Davison 137) and 16-0. NSW won by 10 wickets.
ONE-DAY MATCH: Guwahati: Sri Lanka 172-6 (R Mahanama 66, Singh 5-22, Mohanty 3-31). India 173-3 (37.5 overs). India won by seven wickets.
TOUR MATCHES: Brisbane: South Africa 458-8 dec and 220-7 dec. Australia A 330 (J Langer 69) and 122-1. Match drawn. **Port Elizabeth:** England U-19 285-8 (Bosch 4-45). South Africa Schools Colts 237-0 (D Malcolms 77, J Kreusch 57). England U-19 won by 20 runs.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP: Quarter-final: Patna: India 81-5 (Price 2-3). South Africa 80-9 (Kulkarni 2-4, Margaret 2-13). India won by five wickets.

Equestrianism

INTERNATIONAL SHOWJUMPING (Olympia): **The Christmas Eve Six Bar:** 1=, Domina III (W Melliger, Switz), Lionel (R Hoekstra, GB); 3=, Carat II (J-M Nicolas, Fr), Nissan Carthago (J Lansink, Neth). **The Christmas Hamper:** 1, Dolly (P Charles, Ire) 41.98sec; 2, Flaminka (D Lampard, GB) 43.18; 3, Loro Piana Wanda (R Pessoa, Br) 43.52. **The Christmas Knock-Out:** 1, Virtual Village Solitaire (G Billington, GB); 2, Baccara (R Hoekstra, GB); 3=, Trudo Jannique (L Philippaerts, Bel), Carat II (J-M Nicolas, Fr).

American Football

NFL: Cincinnati 16, Baltimore 14; Dallas 7, NY Giants 20; Kansas City 25, New Orleans 13; Minnesota 39, Indianapolis 28; Tampa Bay 31, Chicago 15; Tennessee 16, Pittsburgh 6; Washington 35, Philadelphia 32; Arizona 29, Atlanta 26; Denver 38, San Diego 3; Detroit 13, NY Jets 10; Oakland 9, Jacksonville 20; Seattle 38, San Francisco 9. **Leading standings: American Conference: Eastern Div:** 1, *Miami (W9, L6, T0, PF327, PA313); 2, *New England (9-6-0-355-277); 3, NY Jets (9-7-0-348-287). **Central:** 1, †Pittsburgh (11-5-0-372-307); 2, *Jacksonville (11-5-0-394-318); 3, Tennessee (8-8-0-333-310). **Western:** 1, †Kansas City (13-3-0-375-232); 2, *Denver (12-4-0-472-287); 3, Seattle (8-8-0-365-362). **National Conference: Eastern:** 1, †NY Giants (10-5-1-307-265); 2, Washington (8-7-1-327-289); 3, Philadelphia (6-9-1-317-372). **Central:** 1, †Green Bay (13-3-0-422-282); 2, *Tampa Bay (10-6-0-299-263); 3, *Detroit (9-7-0-379-306). **Western:** 1, †San Francisco (13-3-0-375-265); 2, Atlanta (7-9-0-320-361); 3, Carolina (7-9-0-265-314). (†=Clinched Division title; *=Clinched Play-off berth).

Ice Hockey

SUPERLEAGUE: Ayr 6, Bracknell 0; Cardiff 7, Manchester 1; Newcastle 2, Sheffield 4.
UPPER DECK CHRISTMAS CUP: Fife 8, Paisley 5; Guildford 12, Kingston 4; Lancashire 2, Telford 6; Peterborough 20, Murrayfield 1, Solihull 15, Cardiff 5.
NHL: NY Rangers 0, Buffalo 2; Anaheim 2, San Jose 4. **Leading standings: Eastern Conference: Northeast Div:** 1, Pittsburgh (W18, L11, T8, GF100, GA88, Pts44); 2, Montreal (19-14-4-107-90-42); 3, Boston (16-14-8-91-92-38). **Atlantic:** 1, New Jersey (23-10-1-108-67-47); 2, Philadelphia (20-8-7-101-78-47); 3, Washington (15-13-7-103-98-36). **Western Conference: Central:** 1, Dallas (24-9-4-118-77-52); 2, Detroit (20-9-7-118-81-47); 3, St Louis (21-12-4-109-86-46). **Pacific:** 1, Colorado (18-8-11-110-93-47); 2, Los Angeles (14-14-6-101-97-34); 3, San Jose (14-18-4-91-100-32).

Sailing

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE: Third leg: 1, EF Language 105pts; 2, Swedish Match 92; 3, Chessie Racing 81; 4, Merit Cup 70; 5, Innovation Kvaerner 60; 6, Toshiba 50; 7, Silk Cut 40; 8, BrunelSunergy 30; 9, EF Education 10. **Overall:** 1, EF Language 302; 2, Innovation Kvaerner 257; 3, Swedish Match 255; 4, Merit Cup 226; 5, Chessie Racing 213; 6, Silk Cut 206; 7, Toshiba 207; 8, EF Education 80; 9, BrunelSunergy 66.

Fixtures

(7.30 unless stated)

Football

RYMAN LEAGUE: Third Division: Epsom & Ewell v Aveley. **Associate Members Trophy: Second round:** Lewes v Horsham. **Full Members Cup: Second round:** Basingstoke Tn v Kingstonian; Boreham Wood v Aylesbury Utd; Hampton v Maidenhead Utd; Hendon v St Albans C. **DR MARTENS CUP: Second round:** Clevedon v Forest Green.
PONTINS LEAGUE CUP: Group Four: Stockport v Chesterfield (7.0). **Group Six:** Rotherham v Tranmere (7.0).

Cricket

TOUR MATCH (one day): **Port Elizabeth:** South Africa Schools v England U-19 (9.0am).

Ice Hockey

SUPERLEAGUE: Bracknell v Manchester (8.0); Newcastle v Nottingham (7.0).
NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE: Kingston v Lancashire.

Sport in brief

Basketball

Worthing Bears have signed the 6ft 7in Canadian forward or centre Peter Knecthel. He arrives on Boxing Day and will make his league debut at home to Sheffield on January 3, when Worthing will be seeking a win after 11 consecutive defeats.

Chess

Michael Adams will play the white pieces against Nigel Short today when Britain's leading grandmasters contest the semi-finals of the Fide world championship, writes Leonard Barden. More than £100,000 is at stake in their two-game series as well as a chance to challenge for Anatoly Karpov's title next month.

Adams joined Short in the last four when he beat Loek van Wely in a 41-move Tromp Opening where he gave up a pawn but had the Dutchman's king constantly in trouble before the Londoner broke through to win the queen. The top-seeded Vishy Anand meets Boris Gelfand in the other semi-final.

Skiing

Yesterday's World Cup slalom at Madonna Di Campiglio in Italy was cancelled because mild weather had made the piste too soft. It was the sixth cancellation of the men's season so far.

Golf

The European Women's Tour, which has lost its main sponsor American Express, has suffered another setback with the withdrawal of the Hennessy Cup tournament. Regarded by the top players as a major event on their tour, it has run for 13 years. Now, however, Hennessy has decided to "review their marketing strategy".

Rugby Union

The Wales prop Christian Loader is to have a neck operation this week and will not play again for his club Swansea or country this season. Capped 19 times, he was injured against New Zealand last month.

Hockey

St Albans, the defending champions, have been drawn in the stronger pool for the preliminary round of the Indoor Club Championship on January 10–11, writes Peter Colwill. Six teams will go through to finals night at Crystal Palace on February 6.

Pool A (at Kidderminster): St Albans, Teddington, Old Loughtonians, Stourport, Isca, Hull. **Pool B** (at Cocks Moors Woods, Birmingham): East Grinstead, Reading, Chelmsford, Barford Tigers, Bath, Doncaster.

1997 – The defining moments

The past year was a watershed for a select band of the world's leading sportsmen. Beginning a series of five profiles by Guardian writers **David Davies** looks at the impact of the American prodigy Tiger Woods. Next: Greg Rusedski, British tennis's new No.1

Young Master who changed golf's face

History in the making
Tiger earns his stripes

BACK in 1996 not a few hardened golf watchers thought that Jack Nicklaus, no less, had taken leave of his senses when he said, portentously, that Tiger Woods would win as many US Masters titles as he, Nicklaus, and Arnold Palmer put together. That figure, for the uninitiated, is 10.

He said this at Augusta at a time when Woods was not yet a professional, although he was indisputably the best amateur the world had seen since Bobby Jones.

One year on and Nicklaus was looking good. Woods, at the age of 21 and in his first major championship as a professional, had his first green jacket and needed only nine more to fulfil a prediction that had seemed, at the time, massively overblown.

In fact the manner of the Woods win made Nicklaus look even better, for this was a snarling Tiger who chewed up both field and golf course, setting scarcely believable records as he went. His winning total of 270, 18 under par, was a record, so was the winning margin of 12 strokes and so was his age: 21 years, three months and 14 days. Severiano Ballesteros, whose birthday always falls during Masters week, was 22 when he won in 1980.

But perhaps more important than the figures was the way he achieved them. Jose Maria Olazabal tells the story of playing with Woods at Augusta when the wind was against at the 1st hole. "He lined up to hit the ball over the fairway bunker," said the Spaniard, "and I thought to myself, 'That is not possible today.' But he carried it comfortably and I thought, 'Hmmm.' Then he lined up to carry the fairway bunker at the 2nd, and I knew that was not possible. But he did that too, and after that, whenever he was about to drive, I found a way not to look. I would clean my spikes or change my glove or take a drink, anything not to look."

But eventually, of course, the Woods figures force attention from everyone. He has become the most heralded force in the game since Nicklaus himself burst upon the scene in 1962 when his first win as a professional was also a major championship, the US Open.

The similarities stop there, though. There a great deal less hype in these days but in any case Nicklaus, although a stunning performer, also conformed to the golfing stereotype: white and from a country-club background. Woods, of course, is black — or Cablinasian as he prefers to describe it. The Ca comes from Caucasian, the bl from black, the in from Indian and the remainder is Asian.

Colour still matters, of course, and for many it was a matter of pure joy that Woods had demonstrated his complete supremacy over the world of golf at Augusta National. This is a club where they have two token black members but only because the US PGA Tour, which supplies the players for the Masters, has adopted a policy of not playing at clubs which refuse membership on the ground of race.

As Gary Player, a man with a very imperfect record when it comes to racial issues, said: "Tiger has the opportunity to do something for the human race that no golfer has done before him. Imagine the people in Africa, 400 million, watching Tiger win the Masters. There has never been a world champion golfer who is black."

The impact of his win has been phenomenal. Shortly after the Masters Tim Finchem, the commissioner of the US Tour, had to sit down with the American television networks to negotiate the renewal of the contract for regular tournaments.

When he got up, the Tour was $343 million (£207 million) richer. He admits that much of that was due to the Tiger Factor and he claims that, because of television money, the average purse on the Tour will exceed $1.9 million by the year 2000.

It has been estimated by the tournaments themselves that Woods brings in, on average, an extra $1.1 million (£660,000) at the gate, and the US PGA, the body that ministers to the clubs, says that the Tiger stimulus to green fees and merchandise sales amounts to $150 million (£90 million) a year. Add to that the measurable impact he has had on Nike goods with a further $60 million (£36 million) in sales — when he won the Masters there were 14 Nike "swooshes" visible on his person — plus his endorsements, Nike, Rolex, Titleist clubs, American Express for around $95 million (£57 million), and his personal winnings and appearance fees of $4.1 million (£2.46 million), and one arrives at the figure of $653.4 million (£393 million) coming into golf.

> Woods played a game with which no one who knows golf was ever familiar: 350-yard drives, silken putts, gorgeous wedges, low punches that curved around trees . . . It's as novel as the microchip or the steam engine.
>
> **James Glassman**
> **International Herald Tribune**

The money men, then, are impressed. The Tiger has become a cash cow unparalleled in golf and perhaps matched only by Michael Jordan in all American sport. But it is not appreciation from the suits that Woods would want, for this is a young man in love with his profession.

He now lives in Orlando and when Palmer was recovering from cancer he went out to the veteran's Bay Hill club for a chat. At one point Palmer asked how Woods was enjoying the Tour and the young man said: "Well, you see, it's like this: I just love playing golf." Palmer looked him in the eye and smiled. "Yeah," he said, "that's something I know about. That's a problem I've had for about 60 years."

After three rounds of this year's Masters, Woods led by nine and the field had effectively been destroyed. But in 1996 Greg Norman had led Nick Faldo by six at the same stage, and lost by five, so everyone was aware of the kind of swing that was possible. Colin Montgomerie, who had just played with Woods, put the doubters right.

"I have a brief comment," he said. "We're all human beings here, but there is no chance humanly possible that Tiger Woods is going to lose this golf tournament. No way. Faldo's not lying second, for a start, and Tiger Woods is not Greg Norman."

Montgomerie knew then the nature of Tiger's talent and others were not slow to express their own feelings on the subject. Norman himself has said: "He is long, strong and articulate. Golf needs someone like him." Ernie Els, Woods's natural rival and winner of two majors, says: "He has made others wake up and take the game more seriously. I think we will all have to try harder and get to his level."

Montgomerie, desperate to win his first major, recognises that the bar has been raised. "We will have to improve beyond what we thought was necessary in order to compete," he says. Faldo, winner of six majors so far, says: "There are no par fives for Tiger. Even on the monsters he gets there in two. He's got the game throttled. If his driver and putter are working then he is unbeatable."

But just as it was Nicklaus who recognised the Woods Masters potential in 1996, so it was the great man who gave the benediction after the second round of the Masters, '97. In 1963 Nicklaus, with some huge hitting, had won his first Masters and caused Bobby Jones to say, in awed affection: "Mr Nicklaus plays a game with which I am not familiar."

Thirty-four years later Woods had just gone round in 66, smashing the ball unseen and unseemly distances, and Nicklaus, weighing his words, said: "I'm going to tell you one thing. It's a shame Bob Jones isn't here. He could have saved the words he used about me in '63 for this young man, because he's playing a game we're certainly not familiar with."

And with those words, the baton was passed. All that Tiger Woods has now to do, is hold on to it.

Tiger feat . . . Woods celebrates his final putt as he destroys the world's best at Augusta PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID CANNON

Motor Racing

F1 rulers told to weaken grip

Stephen Bates in Brussels

FORMULA ONE received a pre-Christmas payback for its role in delaying a European ban on tobacco sponsorship yesterday when the European Commission ordered grand prix racing's governing body, the FIA, to change its rules and loosen its control over the sport.

A dossier listing at least 15 infringements of European Union trading regulations is understood to have been sent to Max Mosley, the federation's president. The commission believes the federation is in breach of articles 85 and 86 of the EC Treaty requiring free trade and preventing organisations from abusing dominant commercial positions. As such, the FIA could be taken before the European Court of Justice.

The commission has also warned that Bernie Ecclestone, the *FIA vice-president* who runs the marketing arm of Formula One, may be involved in a conflict of interest by carrying out commercial activities which benefit his company, Formula One Promotions.

An FIA spokesman dismissed the commission's action as naive last night, warning that it might cause more grands prix to be moved to other parts of the world. Twelve of the world championship's 17 rounds were in Europe this year.

The commission believes the FIA's technical control of the sport should be separated from its financial and commercial interests. The governing body has been told that its refusal to allow competitors access to the market for organising motor-sport events represents a serious infringement of the treaty, as does its monopoly over broadcasting rights. The federation's 14-year exclusivity agreement with Ecclestone's company is also held to be excessive.

The FIA responded: "The commission is being naive and does not understand our position. There is nothing to stop an entrepreneur organising a grand prix but this association has got to be able to control its own championship.

"The bottom line is that the FIA is not a European organisation and if the EU tries in this unsubtle way to impose its regulations it will accentuate the trend to have more races elsewhere in the world."

The move, initiated by Karel van Miert, the EU's competition commissioner, comes less than three weeks after European health ministers bowed to the sport's pressure and granted it nine seasons — until after the 2006 series of grands prix — to phase out tobacco advertising and sponsorship.

The commission had wanted to limit the ban's phasing-in period to five years but then the British Prime Minister Tony Blair decided to oppose an early end to tobacco sponsorship of Formula One on the ground that the sport might leave Europe and that jobs in Britain would be lost as a consequence.

The commission's action is the second time the EU has intervened in the running of a major sport for allegedly breaching regulations designed to promote a free market in all business activities. Two years ago it acted over European football's transfer regulations after the Jean-Marc Bosman ruling.

● Williams have selected Juan Pablo Montoya as their test driver for 1998 after a two-day test at Barcelona. The Colombian was in competition with Max Wilson of Brazil and the French pair Soheil Ayari and Nicolas Minassian.

Squash

Complete player savours 10 years at the very top

Richard Jago on Jansher Khan, still No.1 after a decade but perhaps not much longer

JANSHER KHAN has reason to celebrate the new year after retaining his position as world No. 1 in the rankings announced yesterday by the Professional Squash Association.

He remains No. 1 in the January list in spite of missing the World Open Championship in Kuala Lumpur last month and losing four times in World Tour events since the summer, including three defeats by Peter Nicol.

Nicol, the 24-year-old left-handed Scot, has beaten the 28-year-old Pakistani in Kuwait and Bombay since losing to the world No. 4 Rodney Eyles of Australia in the final of the World Open. But Nicol, the No. 2, should move ahead of Jansher when the rankings are updated in February.

Whatever the future may hold, Jansher can reflect on 12 months of ominous challenge and a decade in which he has been the world's leading player almost continuously. Since reaching the pinnacle on January 1 1988 he has occupied it for 96 out of 120 months. Only one other male player, Jahangir Khan, has managed anything comparable and no one has achieved the durability of the unlikely-looking, pale, twig-thin Pathan.

The last time Jansher was deposed, 4½ years ago by the Australian Chris Dittmar, was when he had points deducted for a late withdrawal.. The only other player to have overtaken Jansher is his compatriot Jahangir Khan, who completed a record 10 British Open titles in 1991.

Resentment of the greater acclaim given to his rival explains much about the longevity of Jansher's career. The booing that greeted his return to the court in Karachi for the fifth game against Jahangir in the final of the 1988 Pakistan Masters, not long after Jansher became world champion, had a profound effect. The memory spurred him through problems with his back, a foot and homesickness.

Jansher's crime had been to pronounce that he had the measure of his rival, who was the older by six years. It was little more than professional psychology but it violated Pathan custom about respect. Even the brilliant Azam Khan had in the 1950s allowed the elder Hashim Khan to win at *least two of his* seven British Opens.

Jansher . . . defeats by Nicol

Jansher's personality was affected and he became more rebellious. After he walked out of a World Open dinner his prize-money was withheld. After he threw a final — against Jahangir in the Stuttgart Open in 1989 — he was reprimanded and given a suspended ban. Eventually, after late withdrawals from tournaments, he was banned for a month.

By contrast Jansher's behaviour on court was usually exemplary, despite a complicated private life, and his ability to adapt to the major rule changes in 1989 helped make him a uniquely great player.

These changes were designed not merely to make creative shots easier but to prevent one man from dominating; instead they caused the finest containing player of all to develop such variety that he became a player for all opponents and all seasons.

He is at last close to the *ultimate accolades, which* may purge him of some bitterness, though it is likely he will always regard the World Open as more important than the British Open, considered by many the blue riband event. Two more world titles would give Jansher a record total of 10 to sit alongside Jahangir British record.

If Jansher is no longer equal to the task, many will recall him as the most complete player the circuit has seen, but his homeland may still prefer to commemorate the other JK.

● Four British players appear in the new rankings, including the Welshman Alex Gough who is in the top 10 for the first time.

WORLD RANKINGS: 1, Jansher Khan (Pak); 2, P Nicol (Scot); 3, J Power (Can); 4, R Eyles (Aus); 5, Ahmed Bareda (Egy); 6, S Parke (Eng); 7, A Gough (Wales); 8, A Hill (Aus); 9, D Harris (Eng); 10, D Jenson (Aus).

Equestrianism

Hoekstra is happy with his half-life

John Kerr at Olympia

BRITAIN's Rob Hoekstra on Lionel and the Swiss rider Willi Melliger on Domina 11 shared the honours in yesterday's Six-Bar class which, like Friday night's puissance, went the full distance of five rounds.

Six of the original 16 remained for the fifth test, when the final vertical stood at 6ft 4in, but last year's winners Bert Romp and Samantha were not among them.

The Kent-based Hoekstra, born in Holland but resident in Britain for 16 years, was delighted with the performance of his American-bred 10-year-old, a former racehorse acquired from the Spanish rider Luis Cevera less than two years ago. The Briton will shortly head for the Spanish sunshine circuit where he enjoyed several successes 12 months ago.

Hoekstra came close to a double yesterday but, riding Baccara, was narrowly beaten by Geoff Billington on *Virtual Village Solitaire in a* hard-fought final of the P&O Christmas Knock-out.

Ireland's former European champion Peter Charles, who did not defend his title last summer, had his first win of the show on the versatile Dolly, with whom he finished second in the Geneva Grand Prix last week.

In the Christmas Hamper Stakes, a one-round speed contest, he showed his judgment of pace when heading a 26-strong field by more than a second from Britain's Di Lampard on Flaminka. The young Brazilian Rodrigo Pessoa and Loro Piana Wanda, who won a similar event last Friday, filled the minor place.

Charles, who was runner-up to Ludger Beerbaum in the Volvo World Cup qualifier on Saturday, thus moved up to second place in the Leading Rider award behind the German.

Boxing

Lewis signs to fight Holyfield

LENNOX LEWIS, Britain's World Boxing Council heavyweight champion, has landed a dream $50 million (£30 million) unification bout against Evander Holyfield of the United States in Las Vegas on April 25.

"I'm happy the deal has been done," Lewis said last night. "But like all things in boxing I'll believe it's happening when Holyfield and I are standing face to face in the ring in Las Vegas."

The unification fight looked likely once Lewis had blown away Andrew Golota in Atlantic City in October. The Pole was rated in the United States and Lewis's 95-second blitz of him made a Holyfield fight a "natural".

"Lewis's stock has gone up so much he doesn't need the Americans as much as the Americans need him," said his manager Frank Maloney. "Holyfield would be the most difficult opponent for him or the easiest, depending on *which version of Holyfield* turned up. If Holyfield the battler comes to Lennox it will be a very quick night."

The deal, struck at the promoter Don King's Florida home at the weekend, depends on Holyfield, the International Boxing Federation and World Boxing Association champion, agreeing to a guaranteed purse of around $30 million.

The 35-year-old will take home even more if Home Box Office viewing figures hit the jackpot. Lewis's final cheque may be bigger too, and if he wins he could face an autumn three-title defence against Mike Tyson — a fight which Lewis's promoter Panos Eliades estimates would be worth up to £100 million.

The Lewis-Holyfield clash is part of a four-fight contract agreed with King by Eliades that includes the fight against Tyson, provided the former undisputed champion has his licence returned by the Nevada State Athletic Commission in July.

Eliades said: "We've agreed terms and entered into a contract. Now Don King has to agree with Holyfield to accept the balance available. The deal is that there is an upside to money, depending on pay-per-view. Holyfield will receive a definite amount, plus any upside, and the same goes for Lewis.

"Money should not stand in the way of a Holyfield fight if Evander is the man I think he is. He should fight for the right to unify the title.

"I'm delighted with the deal, and Tyson is in the mix as well. Funnily enough I bumped into Tyson at the airport in Miami. We asked each other how we were and I told him we signed Lennox against Holyfield, and he said, 'Give him a good beating for me, and I'll look forward to fighting Lennox when you've beaten him.'

"A fight against Tyson would happen very soon after he comes back, possibly around September or October. With three belts on the line it would be colossal."

Lewis, meanwhile, is committed to a WBC defence against the European champion Željko Mavrovic of Croatia in London in June. Lewis, 32, has not fought in London since losing his title to Oliver McCall at Wembley in September 1994, his only professional defeat and one he has since avenged.

● Bruce Woodcock, a former British, Empire and European heavyweight champion and the biggest name in British boxing in the late Forties and into 1950, has died in Doncaster aged 76.

Woodcock, a former railway worker, lost only four times in a 39-fight career.

Obituary, page 10

Cayard victory in the sprint to Sydney, page 13
Lewis wins £30m date with Holyfield, page 15
Parma in pursuit of Asprilla, page 14
Euro warning for Formula One, page 15

SportsGuardian

Sugar brings his old sparring partner back to Tottenham

A word from the chairman

'This guy is special. He came to the meeting seeking a challenge, not loads of money. In my business you meet some hard dealers. He is the most genuine, honest footballer I have met.'
Alan Sugar, August 1994

'I wouldn't wash my car with Klinsmann's shirt now. There you are, you can have it if you want it.'
Alan Sugar, August 1995

'He really enjoyed his time here. We have solved our problems a long time ago and he really does like the club and enjoyed the way the British public treated him.'
Alan Sugar, yesterday

Martin Thorpe reports on the return of the fan's favourite to White Hart Lane

Klinsmann to the rescue

Rest ye merry . . . Sugar, left, lines up next to Klinsmann at yesterday's press conference. Gross is on the right SEAN SMITH

IF YOU are going to have a second coming, what better time than Christmas? Jürgen Klinsmann walked back into White Hart Lane yesterday 2½ years after walking out and promised to do all he could to resurrect Tottenham Hotspur's season.

It looks an unlikely move given the amount of public scorn the chairman Alan Sugar directed at him in 1995 for exercising an opt-out clause after only one season. But their arguments have long been patched up and, after countless rumours that the German would return, circumstances this week finally allowed the deal to be done: a £175,000 transfer from Sampdoria, an initial six-month contract and wages estimated at £35,000 a week.

In a further trek down memory lane, Sugar also announced yesterday that the former Spurs manager David Pleat will join the club's board from January 15 as director of football, overseeing the scouting and youth policy as well as dealing with contract negotiations.

Ironically the 33-year-old Klinsmann is being hired as the mercenary Sugar so despised him for being when he left for Bayern Munich "to win titles". That backhand indictment of Spurs' prospects proved correct. But having won the Uefa Cup and German title with Bayern, Klinsmann's ambitions appear sufficiently satiated for him to return to Tottenham and attempt to lift the spirits of fans and players with some of the magic that so entranced White Hart Lane in 1994-95, when he scored 29 goals and was voted England's player of the season.

The appreciation was mutual. "I have played in many countries," said Klinsmann, "and I have never had that feeling with the club and fans I had here.

"I have always followed Tottenham's results since and recently saw them near the bottom of the table. So when Alan asked if I could help out, I said yes. I would not have joined another Premiership club. It is a wonderful challenge and it is a bit like coming home."

With Chris Armstrong out for about two months and Steffen Iversen struggling with a foot injury, the Spurs coach Christian Gross, who shares Klinsmann's lawyer, had twice spoken to the player about rejoining Tottenham after convincing Sugar that another striker was needed.

Spurs tried to lure Klinsmann back last season but he wanted a move to Italy, where he hopes eventually to settle. However, he recently fell out with Sampdoria's coach Vujadin Boskov, who took over from Cesar Luis Menotti last month.

After also previously falling out with Arsène Wenger at Monaco and some of the players and media at Bayern, Klinsmann is seeking a hassle-free end to his career. Sugar promised him one.

"There are no problems now between us," said the chairman. "I was a bit naive about contracts when he left originally, but that was my problem not Jürgen's."

The question is, can Klinsmann deliver? He is now 33 and, though still guaranteed a starting place in the German side, recently went 10 games without an international goal.

A 2½-month injury lay-off and the row with Boskov have restricted him to eight games and two goals this season. And his previous Spurs success owed something to his partnership with Teddy Sheringham, who has since moved to Manchester United.

His return is a gamble, but as Gross said: "Though we need him for his goals, we need his personality much more."

Klinsmann says he will do his best and is confident the team can stay up. In the spring a decision will be made about whether he signs for another season.

Christmas delays mean he is unlikely to be registered in time for the Boxing Day game at Aston Villa. But that only adds spice to the story. His first match back is likely to be the following Sunday — at home to Arsenal.

Jürgen's progress

1994 Signed for Tottenham for £2 million after helping Germany to World Cup quarter-finals

December 1997
Returns to Tottenham

Jim White

Time to blow the whistle on ritual of ref slagging

HERE is a selection of post-match managerial comments from the weekend:

"It was the most obvious penalty you could wish to see," fumed Harry Redknapp, about West Ham's failure to be awarded a spot-kick at Blackburn. "If that's not a penalty I'll pack this job in."

Then this was Steve McMahon talking about Swindon's home draw with Birmingham which involved one of his players being shown the red card: "I'll get into trouble whatever I say about this referee. He should be relegated. We played 10 men against 12."

And this was Kenny Dalglish explaining Newcastle's defeat at St James' Park on Sunday: "You've got to look at the referee. He was the worst man on the pitch."

As this is the season of newspaper quizzes, here's an easy one to kick off with: notice any common thread? Any low denominator in the foam-flecked invective? And these were by no means isolated examples. There were others, notably every interview conducted on Match of the Day including Martin O'Neill's moment in the television arclight which saw him transformed from a calm likeness of a civilised human being into a gibbering husk of fury at the very mention of the word referee.

Bash the ref has always been an important part of football, a safety valve for emotions in the stand, a chance to cast an authority figure as the enemy. But it is getting out of hand: "If in doubt slag the man in black" (with red or white in-lay shadow stripes) has become the managers' mantra.

This is not to suggest that authority should never be challenged, that the ref's decision must always be right or that managers are not entitled to voice their anger. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with criticism of David Elleray, with his Branson's balloon of a pumped-up ego, or of Messrs Willard, Reed and Durkin, sharper with a card than Paul Daniels in his prime. The problem is that ref-slagging has become a ritual response every bit as unrevealing as Prime Minister's Question Time or a John Humphrys interview. Just as the Government blames Tory mismanagement every time it makes an unpopular decision, so football managers, whenever their teams fail to win, blame the ref. And frankly it is becoming every bit as tedious.

TAKE Redknapp at Blackburn. Bizarre as Gerald Ashby's sudden myopia when faced with Colin Hendry sending Paul Kitson into orbit may have been, it was not the referee who cost West Ham the game. It wasn't the ref's fault even when he sent off Steve Lomas in the melee that followed his decision not to award a penalty. What lost the match for the Hammers was their own bad play. That and Blackburn's growing efficiency. But that would have been too much for their manager to admit. So much easier to find a scapegoat.

Dalglish gave a masterclass in the art of leading the finger of blame away from its proper target on Sunday. The Newcastle manager spent most of his post-match interview blaming the referee for his team's defeat rather than, say, pointing out that the opposition had the kind of match-winning goalkeeper and striker that his own side lack.

He then concluded with this entertaining construction: "It's a shame that the headlines will be about the referee when they should be about Manchester United's performance and indeed our own."

The cunning of Dalglish's cameo was that the headlines were only ever likely to be about the referee because he had raised the subject in the first place. And he knew it.

Meanwhile, as Dalglish was speaking, down the St James' corridor the man who long ago mastered the technique of popping diversionary nuggets into his interviews had come up with a new line to take the attention away from his side's bruising and significant victory.

"We didn't deserve to win," said Alex Ferguson, looking less like a triumphant manager than someone who had just heard that his dog had been run over. "It was disappointing. We can play better than that."

The rest of football must hope it is only a matter of time before the Manchester United boss stops blaming his players and goes back to whingeing about referees.

Guardian Crossword No 21,154

Set by Paul

Across

7,13 Terrible sin wot pleb and sap read? (7,10)
8 Bone with old name in backpack (7)
10,22 Fairly unfair? Looks a contradiction (6,4)
11 Paying little attention or else? Shed tears (8)
12 Bottle not directly on the left (4)
13 See 7
14 Trading stalls label it fish we might catch? (11)
19 I spy a probe, treatment for deterioration of eyesight (10)
22 See 10
23 Half bass/tenor I could be? (8)
24 Asian master butcher has the best cut sent back (3,3)
25 Fast car (7)
26 We hear Faith is to be tied up (7)

Down

1 Bend a musical leg (7)
2 Some vessels transported aloft bearing the sick (8)
3 North African party gets negative vote overturned (6)
4 Cold time. Cold place. Opposite ends scrapped, then joined forces (8)
5 Churn tied the knot over a fold of skin (6)
6 House record (7)
9 Exhibits hat, a disruptive act (4,7)
15 How to get in and get on with black and white in harmony? (8)
16 (8)
17 Rock-related lever (7)
18 Set aside, though nothing repaid (7)
20 Rest hairy legs in the bath? (6)
21 Strongly desire to be a prominent church feature (6)

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